



Take Care of YOU

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Cold Weather Safety Tips

- Wear protective layers of clothing
- Protect extremities
- Choose appropriate footwear
- Stay dry
- Seek shelter
- Hydrate adequately
- Wash hands regularly
- Know when to rest

If at any time you think you may be experiencing symptoms of a cold weather-related condition, seek medical attention and consult with your physician for proper diagnosis and treatment protocols.

Cold Weather Health and Safety

In regions like Alaska, cold climate months present risks of certain injuries and illnesses such as hypothermia, frostbite, dehydration, and respiratory infections. Understanding these risks and the prevention methods for these conditions can help ensure your health and safety while outdoors and during cold weather activities.

Cold weather injuries encompass a range of conditions that can result from prolonged exposure to cold climate conditions. Hypothermia, characterized by abnormally low core body temperature, can occur during extended exposure to cold, wet conditions, and symptoms range from slowed mental and muscular functions to lethargy, disorientation, and unconsciousness. Frostbite is a condition that causes tissues to freeze from extreme cold exposure, and the typical symptoms include numbness, discoloration, and restricted joint movement. Other cold injuries that require attention include chilblains, trench foot, sunburn, windburn, and snow blindness.

A few simple but effective ways to prevent these injuries include wearing lightweight, protective clothing layers (start with a moisture-wicking base layer, then an insulating layer, and finish with a windproof and waterproof outer layer), covering exposed skin to prevent heat loss (especially on extremities such as fingers, toes, ears, and nose), wearing appropriate footwear and eyewear, staying dry, and seeking warm shelter when necessary.

During winter months, additional precautions are also needed to minimize risks of respiratory infections, slips and falls, and muscle strains. This includes frequent

handwashing, staying home when unwell, vaccination, regular exercise, a balanced diet, quality sleep, wearing non-slip footwear, using proper lifting techniques and body mechanics, avoiding overexertion, stretching regularly, and staying hydrated.

Proper hydration, in fact, is often overlooked in cold climates but is a simple and effective way to prevent all cold-related injuries and illnesses. People tend to not feel as thirsty in cold weather as they do when in warmer climates, making it very easy to become dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include darkened urine and decreased urine production, dry mouth, tiredness, and an increased heart rate. Adequate hydration and the avoidance of alcohol and caffeine is critical for preventing dehydration and associated injuries.

When it comes to cold weather injuries, proactive prevention, early detection of symptoms, and immediate treatment are vital. Prioritize proper clothing, equipment, and hydration for yourself and those in your circle of care so you can enjoy cold weather activities safely and comfortably.