



# Cold Weather Guidelines

## SCHOOLS

Peel Public Health recommends the following steps be taken to prevent cold injuries:

### General Recommendations

1. Establish both a policy and plan to deal with potential consequences of extreme temperatures and winter storms (e.g. power outage, lack of transportation). Have an emergency kit available.
2. Reduce the amount of time children spend outdoors when the temperature is -20 degrees Celsius or colder (with or without wind chill).
3. Keep children indoors when the temperature is -25 degrees Celsius or colder (with or without wind chill).<sup>1</sup> Some medical conditions may increase sensitivity to cold and parents should consult their physician for advice.
4. Allow indoor breaks if children say they are feeling cold or during extreme temperatures.
5. Ensure children are dressed warmly, covering exposed skin: insulated boots, winter weight coats, mittens, hats, and neck warmers.
6. Change wet clothing or footwear immediately.
7. Although these conditions are unlikely to occur during the school day, ensure that all staff are able to recognize and treat symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia. Give plenty of warm fluids to prevent dehydration.
8. When children are outside, be watchful for shivering or signs of numbness.
9. Educate parents and children about dealing with cold weather: drinking plenty of fluids, dressing warmly, and recognizing signs of cold injury.

<sup>1</sup>Reference: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/meteo-weather/default.asp?lang=En&n=5FBF816A-1>

More information:  
Call Peel Public Health at **905-799-7700**  
or 905-584-2216 in Caledon.

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## COLD INJURY SIGNS AND TREATMENT

### **SIGNS OF COLD INJURY**

Mild Cold Injury: Shivering or numbness.

Frostbite: Skin may look whitish or greyish yellow, feel hard or waxy and be numb.

Severe Hypothermia: Fatigue, confusion or slurring of speech –  
**call 911, this is an emergency.**

### **TREATMENT OF COLD INJURIES**

**Move the person out of cold as soon as possible, then:**

- remove wet clothing;
- warm the affected area **SLOWLY** using warm water (NOT hot water), and warm hands/body heat (do not rub);
- give warm drinks.

**If you cannot move the person out of the cold:**

- cover them with something dry such as clothing or blankets while waiting for help;
- do not attempt to warm the affected area because warming and refreezing will cause greater damage to the area;
- give warm drinks.

### **AVOID ADDITIONAL INJURY**

**Skin from cold injury is fragile and can be easily damaged.**

- DO NOT RUB the area
- The affected area is numb and easily burned.  
DO NOT HEAT THE SKIN QUICKLY by using hot water, hot water bottles, heating pads or electric blankets.

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