

POST FALLS FAMILY MEDICINE

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COLD WEATHER TIPS

As many seasoned North Idaho residents know, it can get a little cold around here this time of year. And while Spring will soon thaw things out, there will still be some frigid temperatures in the coming weeks. For the many that have recently relocated here this can be quite an adjustment. It can also be a challenge for our elderly neighbors and loved ones.

In addition to cold weather exposure these temperatures also bring slip hazards and can motivate people to try unsafe methods to keep their homes warm. Each year around 600 Americans die from hypothermia.

Additionally, 36 million Americans report falls resulting in 32,000 deaths, and carbon monoxide injuries account for 50,000 ER visits.

AVOID HYPOTHERMIA:

The first sign of hypothermia is shivering. If left to its course it can rapidly progress to slowed movement, decreased thought process, longer reaction time, impaired judgement, coma, and death.

- Wear appropriate attire to include several layers, gloves, warm socks. Remember a hat as well, as large amounts of heat are lost from the head
- Keep the home temperature above 68 degrees, especially in the bedroom.
- Eat warm foods and drink warm liquids
- Avoid alcohol. While this can make you feel warm, it causes dilation of blood vessels resulting in greater heat loss.
- Check on elderly friends, neighbors, and loved ones regularly to make sure they are staying warm

REDUCE YOUR RISK FALL

- Use a walking stick outside when ice/snow may be present.
- Keep walkways clear of ice/snow as best as possible. If your elderly neighbor is unable to do this, you may offer to help if you can.

AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE INJURY

- Make sure to have working carbon monoxide detectors. Because carbon monoxide is slightly lighter than air place the detector 5' or higher on a wall or on the ceiling. There should be at least one detector on each level of the home and placed close to sleeping areas.
IMPORTANT: Most smoke detectors ARE NOT carbon monoxide detectors too.
- Do not use charcoal or gas grills inside
- Make sure debris, ice, snow is not covering outside stacks or vents

NICK BOZARTH

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patients.
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AVOID OTHER COLD WEATHER INJURIES

- Do not use hot water to clear a frozen windshield or window, this can cause explosive shattering
- Ensure winter supplies are in your vehicle in case you get stranded

Stay warm and safe out there.

All the best, N. Bozarth, PA-C