

WINTER SAFETY TIPS

People still must venture outside during the winter months to go to work, visit their doctors, and shop for food and other necessary items.

Slips and falls can lead to serious health issues especially for the elderly. Often these types of falls cause major injuries such as hip and wrist fractures, head trauma and major lacerations.

The following tips may decrease the number of winter injuries:

- Plan ahead and give yourself sufficient time.
- When walking on steps, always use the hand railings and plant your feet firmly on each step.
- When walking on an icy or snow-covered walkway, take short steps and walk at a slower pace so you can react quickly to a change in traction.
- Bending your knees a little and taking slower and shorter steps increases traction and can greatly reduce your chances of falling. It also helps to stop occasionally to break momentum.
- Even though streets and sidewalks have been cleared of snow and ice, you should still be approached with caution. Look out for “black ice”. Dew, fog and water vapor can freeze on cold surfaces and form an extra thin, nearly invisible layer of ice that can look like a wet spot on the pavement. It often shows up early in the morning or in areas that are shaded from the sun.
- Carry heavy items can challenge your sense of balance. Try not to carry too much – you need to leave your hands and arms free to better balance yourself.
- Be prepared to fall and try to avoid using your arms to break your fall. If you fall backward, make a conscious effort to tuck your chin so your head doesn’t strike the ground with a full force.
- When entering a building, remove as much snow and water from your boots as you can. Take notice that floors and stairs may be wet and slippery – walk carefully.
- Use special care when entering and exiting vehicles – use the vehicle for support.

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Winter is upon us! This means many of us have to shovel our walkways, steps and driveways. Taking a few precautions while you are shoveling can help prevent unnecessary pain and suffering. Before you grab the shovel, review the following tips:

- If you have a history of heart problems or are inactive, talk to your doctor. There is an increase in the number of fatal heart attacks among those shoveling each year. You may have to ask family or friends for help or consider hiring someone.
- Warm up and stretch before you get started.
- Drink plenty of water to keep yourself hydrated.
- Shovel only fresh snow. Fresh fallen, powdery snow is easier to shovel than the wet, packed-down variety.
- Push, don't lift. It's easier on your back and uses less energy than lifting.
- Pick the right shovel for you. Don't pick up too much at once. Use a small shovel, or fill only one-fourth or one-half of a large one.
- Lift with your legs bent, not your back. Keep your back straight. By bending and "sitting" into the movement, you'll keep your spine upright and less stressed. Your shoulders, torso and thighs can do the work for you.
- Dress the part. Dress in layers; if you work up a sweat, you'll be able to remove some of those layers. Wear a hat and gloves to protect your extremities, wrap on a scarf (tuck it in your coat) and wear wool socks and waterproof boots to protect your body from the cold temperature.
- If your body is telling you to stop, listen to it. Stop if you feel pain or start seeing heart attack warning signs: chest pain; shoulder, neck or arm pain; dizziness, fainting, sweating or nausea; and/or shortness of breath. **GET MEDICAL HELP IMMEDIATELY!**

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We all love the first snowfall. Visions of sledding, snowball fights and snow forts bring back many memories. The Village of Altamont Police Department and Public Works Department each year warn parents to talk to the children about playing in the snow. There are many hazards related to the inert nature of snow itself which can lead to injuries and even death. Please consider the following safety tips:

Sledding:

Never sled on or near roadways.

Watch out for shallow slopes that are free of trees, fences or any other obstacles.

Encourage your child to wear a ski or hockey helmet while sledding.

Never use a damaged sled or one with sharp or jagged edges.

Make sure the handholds on the sled are secure.

Always sit up or kneel on a sled. Lying down increases the risk of head, spine and abdominal injuries.

Snow forts and snow banks:

Children should NOT build snow forts or make tunnels. They may collapse and suffocate a child.

Children should NEVER play in or on snow banks. The DPW drivers and Emergency Vehicles (Police, Fire and Ambulance) may not see children and are unable to stop quickly if a child slips into the road.

Snowballs:

Children should NOT throw snowballs. Snowball fights can lead to injuries, especially to the eyes. Snowballs are more dangerous if the snow is hard-packed or contains a rock or some other hard objects.

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Temperatures fluctuate each winter from below zero degrees to the high forties each year. Even mildly cool temperatures of 60-65 degrees can cause a dangerous drop in internal body temperature, which can be deadly if not treated promptly and properly.

Guarding against hypothermia is extremely important. Hypothermia is classified as a drop in body temperature below 96 degrees and can be extremely dangerous if not detected early. Medical experts believe certain conditions such as stroke, severe arthritis and Parkinson's disease can block the body's response to cold, as can some medications. Seniors are particularly susceptible to accidental hypothermia.

Warning signs of hypothermia include the following:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Numbness
- Confusion, disorientation, drowsiness
- Stiff muscles
- Slurred speech
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Weak pulse
- Stumbling and loss of coordination

There are a number of ways to guard against hypothermia. A few are listed below.

- Try to limit your time outdoors, especially if you are in a high-risk group.
- If you are forced to be outside during cold weather, wear warm, layered clothing made of natural fibers.
- You should always wear a hat, warm socks (wool if possible) and mittens to reduce heat loss. Gloves may be needed to perform certain functions or make a fashion statement but provide less protection in maintaining body heat.
- Limit time outdoors on windy days. Winds can lower outside temperatures.
- When indoors, keep thermostat set at a comfortable level. Wear warm clothing, and use enough blankets at night to keep warm.
- Choose hot, nourishing meals and drink warm beverages to keep your body temperature up.

If you suspect someone may be suffering from hypothermia, keep the person warm and dry with blankets. DO NOT rub limbs to warm them up. Encourage person to drink warm beverages (caffeine and alcohol free). SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY!!!!!!