



**CITY OF CLEVELAND**  
Mayor Frank G. Jackson



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## **Be Wise with Winter's Weather** *Cold Can Be Dangerous if Citizens Aren't Careful*

**CLEVELAND** – Local health officials are urging Greater Clevelanders to take extra precautions in the extreme cold weather this season.

The area's climate, with its harsh winter cold days, puts extra stress on the body. The combination of flu season and snowy weather means that staying healthy requires special attention at this time of year. Following these tips can help you stay safe during extreme cold conditions:

- Don't go outside without warm clothing and proper footwear. Shoes should have soles with traction; you should dress in layers; and cover your mouth to protect it from cold air. If you do not have to go outside, stay indoors.
- Get a flu shot. The Cleveland Department of Public Health will offer **free** flu clinics periodically while supplies last. For more information on future flu clinics contact the Cleveland Department of Public Health at (216) 664-4621 or visit our website at [www.clevelandhealth.org](http://www.clevelandhealth.org).
- Keep walkways free of ice and snow. If you are not used to strenuous exercise and/or have heart problems, check with a doctor before shoveling snow.
- Don't turn off the heat to save on utility bills. Hypothermia, a condition in which the body's temperature drops below normal, can be fatal. Please note that older people are more susceptible to getting frostbite and hypothermia
- Replace rubber tips on canes, walkers, and crutches. Home health care stores sell "ice picks" that fit on the ends of canes and walkers to provide extra traction.
- Understand your prescription drugs. Be aware that some medicines make people more susceptible to cold. Ask your doctor if you should be taking extra precautions.

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- Choose portable heaters carefully. All heaters should be kept at least three feet from furniture and draperies to decrease risk of fire. Also, beware that heaters that use liquid fuel can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. For more information about space heaters contact the U.S. Product Safety Commission by phone at (800) 638-2772 or online at <http://www.cpsc.gov>.
- Set your water heater below 125 degrees. This will both save on utility bills and prevent scalding injuries, while keeping water warm enough for washing.
- Don't let your pipes freeze. Check pipes to make sure they are insulated. Make sure you know how to shut off the water, if necessary.
- Check on your fragile neighbors and relatives. Offer to assist them with groceries and other basic needs that require outside trips.
- Have an emergency plan. Keep phone numbers for doctors and family members next to the phone, where they can be found easily. Keep three days' supply of food on hand, in case you become ill and can't go out. Be sure you have at least one telephone that does not need to be plugged into an electrical outlet; cordless phones won't work in a power outage.
- Remember to check to see if your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working properly.

Seniors are more at risk than younger adults for infectious disease like flu and pneumonia, for slip-and-fall injuries such as hip fractures; for winter-related dangers including hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition, factors such as low incomes and mobility limitations can prevent older citizens from seeking or obtaining the help they may need to stay safe and warm. Here are additional factors to consider:

- About 10,000 people age 65 and older die from fall-related injuries each year.
- Of the 36,000 people who die because of the flu each year, most are over 65.
- Complications from the flu can include pneumonia and heart failure.

For health or medical emergencies please dial 9-1-1.