the Advocacy Alliance

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NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT

It's Your Health

Winter 2011

Extreme Cold

A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety From Center for Disease Control and Prevention

When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. Extremely cold temperatures often accompany a winter storm, so you may have to cope with power failures and icy roads. Although staying indoors as much as possible can help reduce the risk of car crashes and falls on the ice, you may also face indoor hazards. Many homes will be too cold, either due to a power failure, or because the heating system isn't adequate for the weather. When people must use space heaters and fireplaces to stay warm, the risk of household fires increases, as well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Exposure to cold temperatures, whether indoors or outside, can cause other serious or life-threatening health problems. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk, but anyone can be affected. To keep yourself and your family safe, you should know how to prevent cold-related health problems and what to do if a cold-weather health emergency arises.

What is Extreme Cold?

What constitutes extreme cold and its effects can vary across different areas of the country. In regions relatively unaccustomed to winter weather, near freezing temperatures are considered "extreme cold". Whenever temperatures drop decidedly below normal and as wind speed increases, heat can leave your body more rapidly. Extreme cold is a dangerous situation that may lead to serious health problems, especially for those who are stranded, without shelter, or in a home with poor insulation, or without heat.

Heat Your Home Safely

If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, you must be careful and follow the manufacturers instructions, as well as the home safety measures. Please remember these safety tips:

- Use fireplace, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside and do not leak flue gas into the indoor air space.
- Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
- Ensure adequate ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater.
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use — **DO NOT SUBSTITUTE!**
- Do not place a space heater near anything that may catch on fire (i.e., any fabric, furniture, or bedding). **Never cover your space heater. Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.**
- Make sure that the cord of an electric space heater is not a tripping hazard — **HOWEVER**, do not run the cord under carpets or rugs. Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater. If your space heater has a damaged electrical cord or produces sparks — **DO NOT USE IT!**
- Store a multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher near the area to be heated.
- Protect yourself from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by installing a battery-operated CO detector and never use generators, grills, camp stoves, or similar devices indoors.

If there is a power failure follow these suggestions to light your home an cook safely:

- Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns rather than candles, if possible.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors — the fumes are deadly.

Outdoor Safety

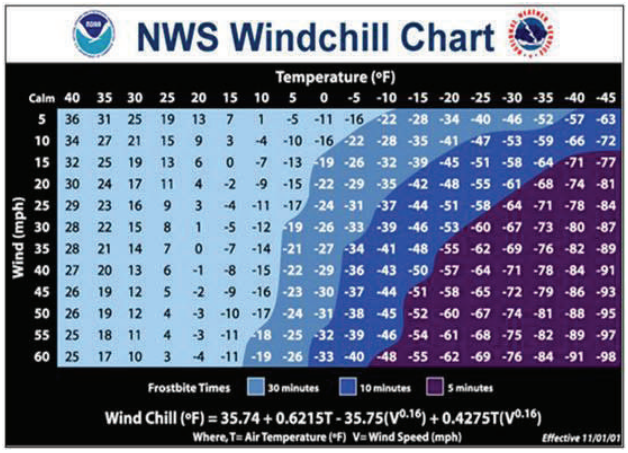
When the weather is extremely cold, and especially if there are high winds, try to stay indoors or make any trips outside as brief as possible. **Dress Warmly and Stay Dry!** All individuals should wear a hat, a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth, sleeves that are snug at the wrist, mittens (they are warmer than gloves), water-resistant coat and boots. Also wear several layers of loose-fitting, tightly-woven, clothing to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind. Wool, silk, or polypropylene inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton. Wet clothing chills the body rapidly, so stay dry, and remember excess perspiration will increase heat loss, so remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm. Also, avoid getting gasoline or alcohol on your skin while de-icing, fueling your car or using a snow blower as skin contact with these materials greatly increase heat loss from the body. Do not ignore shivering! It is an important first sign that the body is losing heat, and persistent shivering is a signal to return indoors.

Avoid Exertion

Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctors advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold. Otherwise, if you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly. Your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.

Understand Wind Chill

The Wind Chill index is the temperature your body feels when the air temperature is combined with the wind speed. It is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. As the speed of the wind increases, it can carry heat away from your body much more quickly, causing skin temperature to drop. When there are high winds, serious weather-related health problems are more likely, even when temperatures are only cool. The Wind Chill Chart the difference between actual air temperature and perceived temperature, and amount of time until frostbite occurs.



Cold-Weather Health Emergencies

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. The most common cold-related problems are hypothermia and frostbite.

Hypothermia

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy, and result in **hypothermia**, or abnormally low body temperature. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and won't be able to do anything about it. Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40° F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water.

Treating Hypothermia

If you notice any of these signs, take the persons temperature. **If it is below 95°, the situation is an emergency, get medical attention immediately.**

If medical care is not available, begin warming the person, as follows:

- Get the victim into a warm room or shelter and if the victim has on any wet clothing, remove it.
- Warm the center of the body first — chest, neck, head, and groin — using an electric blanket, if available. Or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels, or sheets.
- Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature, but do not give alcoholic beverages. Do not try to give beverages to an unconscious person.
- After body temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.
- **Get medical attention as soon as possible!**

Warning signs of hypothermia:

* Shivering, exhaustion
* Confusion, fumbling hands
* Memory loss, slurred speech
* Drowsiness

Victims of hypothermia are often:

* Elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating;
* Babies sleeping in cold bedrooms;
* People who remain outdoors for long periods such as the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc;
* People who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.

A person with severe hypothermia may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or to be breathing. In this case, handle the victim gently, and get emergency assistance immediately. Even if the victim appears dead, CPR should be provided. CPR should continue while the victim is being warmed, until the victim responds or medical aid becomes available. In some cases, hypothermia victims who appear to be dead can be successfully resuscitated.

Frostbite

Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing, and it most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas, and it can permanently damage the body — leading to amputation in severe cases. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.

Recognizing Frostbite

At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin-frostbite may be beginning. Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite:

* A white or grayish-yellow skin area.
* Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy.
* Numbness.
* A victim is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb.

Treating Frostbite

If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care. Because frostbite and hypothermia both result from exposure, first determine whether the victim also shows signs of hypothermia, as described previously. Hypothermia is a more serious medical condition and requires emergency medical assistance. If there is frostbite, but no sign of hypothermia, and immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:

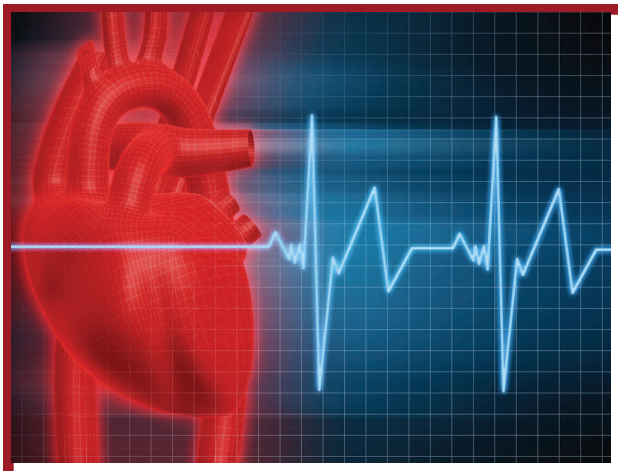
* Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
* Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes – this increases the damage.
* Immerse the affected area in warm, not hot, water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body). You can also warm the affected area using body heat, for example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
* Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
* Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp, a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

Links to Check Out

http://www.cdc.gov/

http://www.everydayhealth.com/heart-health/american-heart-health-month.aspx

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/



February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack. In 2010, an estimated 785,000 Americans had a new coronary attack, and about 470,000 had a recurrent attack. About every 25 seconds, an American will have a coronary event, and about one every minute will die from one.

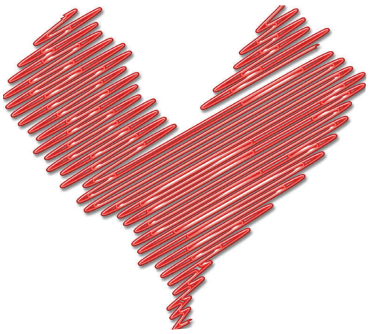
The chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by taking steps to prevent and control factors that put people at greater risk. Additionally, knowing the signs and symptoms of heart attack are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack. People who have survived a heart attack can also work to reduce their risk of another heart attack or a stroke in the future.

Know Your Signs and Symptoms

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense; however, most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs.** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

The American Heart Association, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the American Red Cross, and the National Council on Aging have launched a new "Act in Time" campaign to increase people's awareness of heart attack and the importance of calling 9-1-1 immediately at the onset of heart attack symptoms.



National Wear Red Day is a day when Americans nationwide will wear red to show their support for women's heart disease awareness. This observance promotes the Red Dress symbol and provides an opportunity for everyone to unite in this life-saving awareness movement by showing off a favorite red dress, shirt, or tie, or Red Dress Pin.

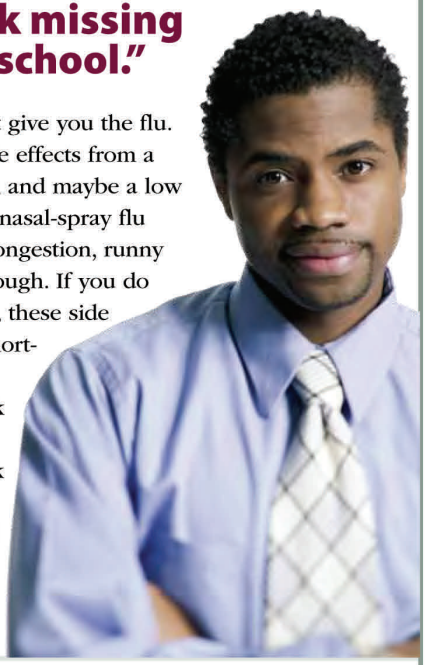
No More Excuses
You Need a Flu Vaccine

"Oh, the flu isn't so bad...right?"

Wrong The flu (influenza) is a contagious disease which affects the lungs and can lead to serious illness, including pneumonia. While pregnant women, young children, older people, and people with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease are at increased risk of serious flu-related complications, *even healthy people* can get sick enough to miss work or school for a significant amount of time or even be hospitalized.

"But what if the flu vaccine makes me sick?

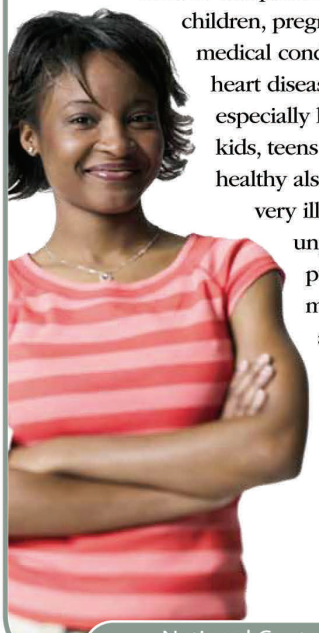
I can't risk missing work or school."



The flu vaccine cannot give you the flu. The most common side effects from a flu shot are a sore arm and maybe a low fever or achiness. The nasal-spray flu vaccine might cause congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or cough. If you do experience them at all, these side effects are mild and short-lived. And that's much better than getting sick and missing several days of school or work or possibly getting a very severe illness and needing to go to the hospital.

"I'm Healthy

I don't need a flu vaccine."



Anyone can become sick with the flu and experience serious complications. Older people, young children, pregnant women and people with medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or kidney disease are at especially high risk from the flu, but kids, teens and adults who are active and healthy also can get the flu and become very ill from it. Flu viruses are unpredictable, and every season puts **you** at risk. Besides, you might be around someone who's at high risk from the flu…a baby…your grandparents, or even a friend. *You don't want to be the one spreading flu, do you?*

"Wait a minute I got a flu vaccine once and still got sick."

Even if you got a flu vaccine, there are still reasons why you might have felt flu-like symptoms:

- You may have been exposed to a *non-flu virus* before or after you got vaccinated. The flu vaccine can only prevent illnesses caused by flu viruses. It cannot protect against non-flu viruses.
- Or you might have been exposed to flu after you got vaccinated but *before the vaccine took effect*. It takes about two weeks after you receive the vaccine for your body to build protection against the flu.
- Or you may have been exposed to an influenza virus that was very different from the viruses included in that year's vaccine. The flu vaccine protects against the three influenza viruses that research indicates will cause the most disease during the upcoming season, but there can be other flu viruses circulating.

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

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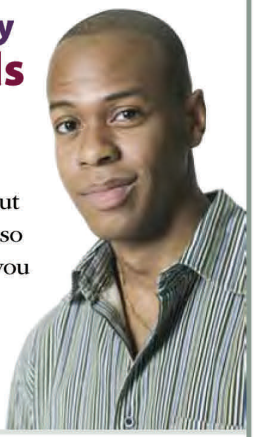
"It's too late for me to get protection from a flu vaccination this season."

Flu seasons are unpredictable. They can begin early in the fall and last late into the spring. As long as flu season isn't over, it's not too late to get vaccinated, even during the winter. Getting a flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your family. If you miss getting your flu vaccine in the fall, make it a New Year's resolution—flu season doesn't usually peak until January or February and can last until May. The flu vaccine offers protection for you all season long.

"I'll get vaccinated only if my family and friends get sick with flu."

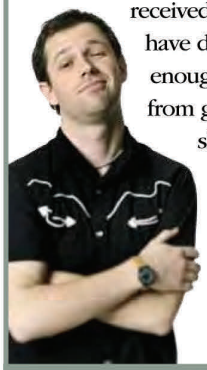


If you wait until people around you get sick from flu, it will probably be too late to protect yourself. It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to provide full protection, so the sooner you get vaccinated, the more likely it is that you will be fully protected once the flu begins to circulate in your community. Flu vaccines are easy to find. They are offered in various locations like your doctor's office, chain pharmacies, grocery stores, and health clinics.

"I hate shots."

The very minor pain of a flu shot is nothing compared to the suffering that can be caused by the flu. The flu can make you very sick for several days; send you to the hospital, or worse. For most healthy, non-pregnant people ages 2 through 49 years old, the nasal-spray flu vaccine is a great choice for people who don't like shots. Either way, a shot or spray can prevent you from catching the flu. So, whatever little discomfort you feel from the minor side effects of the flu vaccine is worthwhile to avoid the flu.

"I got a flu vaccine last year, so I don't need another one."



Your body's level of immunity from a vaccine received last season is expected to have declined. You may not have enough immunity to be protected from getting sick this season. You should get vaccinated again to protect yourself against the three viruses that research suggests are likely to circulate again this season.

"I don't trust that the vaccine is safe."

Flu vaccines have been given for more than 50 years and they have a very good safety track record. Flu vaccines are made the same way each year and their safety is closely monitored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration. Hundreds of millions of flu vaccines have been given safely.

For more information, visit

http://www.flu.gov

http://www.cdc.gov/flu

or call

800-CDC-INFO

This information is courtesy of the CDC. Please check it out online at www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/general/no-excuses-flu-vaccine.pdf

Slow-Cooked Mac "n" Cheese

9 Servings, Prep: 25 min. Cook: 2-3/4 hours

Ingredients

2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
1 can (12 ounces) reduced-fat evaporated milk
1-1/2 cups fat-free milk
1/3 cup egg substitute
1 tablespoon butter, melted
8 ounces reduced-fat process cheese (Velveeta), cubed
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded sharp cheddar cheese, *divided*

Directions

Cook macaroni according to package directions; drain and rinse in cold water. In a large bowl, combine the evaporated milk, milk, egg substitute and butter. Stir in the process cheese, 1-1/2 cups sharp cheddar cheese and macaroni.

Transfer to a 3-qt. slow cooker coated with cooking spray. Cover and cook on low for 2 3/4 to 3 hours or until center is set, stirring once. Sprinkle with remaining sharp cheddar cheese. Yield: 9 servings.

Nutrition Facts:
3/4 cup equals 300 calories, 12 g fat (9 g saturated fat), 45 mg cholesterol, 647 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 19 g protein. **Diabetic Exchanges:** 2 starch,

Prior Makeover Nutritional Facts:
3/4 cup equals 300 calories, 12 g fat (9 g saturated fat), 45 mg cholesterol, 647 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 19 g protein. Diabetic Exchanges: 2 starch, 2 medium-fat meat.

Makeover Peanut Butter Fudge

81 Servings, Prep: 30 min. + chilling

Ingredients

3/4 cup sugar blend
2/3 cup fat-free evaporated milk
2 tablespoons butter
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup butterscotch chips
1/3 cup peanut butter chips
1 jar (7 ounces) marshmallow crème
3/4 cup reduced-fat chunky peanut butter
1 teaspoon Spice Islands® pure vanilla extract

Directions

Line a 9-in. square pan with foil and coat the foil with cooking spray; set aside. In a large heavy saucepan, combine the sugar blend, milk, butter and salt. Cook and stir over medium heat until sugar blend is dissolved. Bring to a rapid boil; boil for 7 minutes or until a candy thermometer reads 224°, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat; stir in chips until melted. Stir in the marshmallow crème, peanut butter and vanilla until blended. Pour into prepared pan. Refrigerate for 2 hours or until firm. Using foil, lift fudge out of pan. Gently peel off foil; cut fudge into 1-in. squares. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Yield: 81 pieces.

Nutrition Facts:
1 piece equals 43 calories, 2 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 1 mg cholesterol, 33 mg sodium, 6 g carbohydrate, trace fiber, 1 g protein.
Diabetic Exchanges: 1/2 starch, 1/2 fat.
Prior Makeover Nutritional Facts:
1 piece equals 58 calories, 3 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 2 mg cholesterol, 35 mg sodium, 8 g carbohydrate, trace fiber, 1 g protein.
Diabetic Exchanges: 1/2 starch, 1/2 fat.

Makeover Pumpkin Cake

18 Servings, Prep: 25 min. Bake: 35 min. + cooling

Ingredients

1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
1-2/3 cups sugar
2 eggs
1/2 cup egg substitute
1/2 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup canola oil
1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 teaspoon Spice Islands® pure vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup chopped pecans

FROSTING:
1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese
1/4 cup butter, softened
3 cups confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons Spice Islands® pure vanilla extract

Directions

In a large bowl, combine the first eight ingredients; beat until well blended. Combine the flour, cinnamon, baking soda and salt; gradually beat into pumpkin mixture until blended. Stir in pecans. Transfer to a 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 35-45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack. For frosting, in a small bowl, beat cream cheese and butter until fluffy. Add confectioners' sugar and vanilla; beat until smooth. Frost cake. Store in the refrigerator. Yield: 18 servings.

Nutrition Facts:
1 piece equals 345 calories, 13 g fat (4 g saturated fat), 40 mg cholesterol, 380 mg sodium, 53 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 5 g protein.
Prior Makeover Nutritional Facts:
1 piece equals 532 calories, 31 g fat (9 g saturated fat), 75 mg cholesterol, 376 mg sodium, 61 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 5 g protein.

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Ideas for Our Newsletter?

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