
NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS WARM ADVICE ABOUT THE COLD

Protect against hypothermia and frostbite. Be safe when using alternate heating sources.

With this week's arctic blast of wintry weather, the Westchester County Department of Health reminds residents to take precautions against hypothermia and frostbite and to take care when heating their homes using alternate heating sources.

"It's a good idea to check on your older or homebound neighbors who live alone when the weather is cold," said Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino. "Just being neighborly and asking if they need anything helps keep people safe."

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, advised residents to bundle up before they spend time outdoors.

"Low temperatures can be life-threatening, especially for seniors and infants," she said. "To avoid frostbite and hypothermia, be sure to wear a hat and gloves and lots of layers when heading outdoors."

Seniors and infants less than one year of age should never sleep in a cold room and should be dressed in warm clothing to prevent the loss of body heat. If a safe temperature cannot be maintained inside your home, make temporary arrangements to stay elsewhere.

Warning signs of hypothermia in adults include shivering, confusion, memory loss, drowsiness, exhaustion and slurred speech. Infants with hypothermia may appear sluggish, with very low energy and bright red, cold skin.

Frostbite is another cold weather concern and is especially dangerous because it often happens with little warning. Numbness can occur so quickly that the individual, unaware of being frostbitten, may remain outside, increasing the chance of permanent damage. Older people, and those with diabetes, are especially vulnerable to frostbite because of impaired circulation.

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Tips to prevent frostbite and hypothermia:

- Dress warmly in windproof clothing.
- Go indoors when you begin to feel cold.
- Wear several layers of loose-fitting clothing to trap body heat.
- Remember gloves, scarves and a hat that covers the ears.

If you think that someone is suffering from hypothermia or frostbite, call a medical provider immediately.

Never use a generator inside your house or in partly enclosed areas, such as garages, basements, porches, crawlspaces, sheds, carports or breezeways, even if your windows are open. Generators should only be operated outside, away from open windows. Carbon monoxide in the generator's fumes can build up and cause carbon monoxide poisoning, which can lead to death. Additionally, if you plan to cook on a barbeque grill or camp stove, remember these also produce carbon monoxide and are for outdoor use only.

The Health Department also reminds residents to take the following precautions when using alternate heating sources in their homes:

- Use fireplaces, 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.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using alternate heating sources like space heaters and wood burning stoves.
- Ensure adequate ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater.
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use - don't substitute.
- Do not place a space heater within three feet of anything that may catch on fire, such as drapes, furniture, or bedding, and never cover your space heater.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children or pets unattended near a space heater, fireplace or wood burning stove.

For more information on cold weather safety, contact the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit our website at www.westchestergov.com/health. You can also follow us on Twitter @wchealthdept or like us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/wchealthdept](https://www.facebook.com/wchealthdept).