



**TO:** Principals and Assistant Principals  
**Cc:** Chief of Schools; Denise Little, Chief Officer of Networks  
**FROM:** Stephanie A. Whyte, MD, MBA, Chief Health Officer   
**DATE:** January 3, 2014  
**RE:** Extreme Cold Weather Considerations

Happy New Year! In anticipation of forecasted extreme cold weather conditions, please find the following guidance for identifying and treating cold-exposure health emergencies. As noted in the CPS Recess Manual, if the temperature outdoors is below 15° F with or without wind chill, students should stay inside for all activities. The primary health risk for both children and adults at such temperatures include hypothermia and frostbite.

### Hypothermia

- Hypothermia develops when a child's temperature falls below normal due to exposure to colder temperatures. It often happens when a young person is playing outdoors in extremely cold weather without wearing proper clothing or when clothes get wet. It can occur more quickly in children than in adults.
- As hypothermia sets in, the child may **shiver** and become **lethargic** and **clumsy**. Speech may become slurred and body temperature will decline in more severe cases.
- If you suspect a child is hypothermic, **call 911** at once. Until help arrives, take the child indoors, remove any wet clothing, and wrap him/her in blankets or warm clothes.

### Frostbite

- Frostbite happens when the skin and outer tissues become frozen. This condition tends to happen on extremities like the fingers, toes, ears and nose.
- Victims may become pale, gray and blistered. At the same time, the child may complain that his/her skin burns or has become numb.
- Skin may also feel unusually firm or waxy.
- If frostbite occurs, bring the child indoors and place the frostbitten parts of her body in warm (not hot) water. 104° Fahrenheit (about the temperature of most hot tubs) is recommended. Warm washcloths may be applied to frostbitten nose, ears and lips.
- Do not rub the frozen areas.
- After a few minutes, dry and cover the child with clothing or blankets. Give him/her something warm to drink.
- If the numbness continues for more than a few minutes, seek medical treatment.

Prevention is the best way to avoid these types of emergencies. Please encourage students to dress in several thin layers and to wear boots, gloves/mittens, and a hat. Encourage parents to dress young children in one more layer of clothing than an adult would wear in the same conditions. The attached flyer can be shared with parents for additional information.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/pages/Winter-Safety-Tips.aspx>.