



Winter Fun and Safety

Ah! The joys of winter weather: snow and ice, sledding and skating, snowmen and skiing. For children of all ages, winter truly is nature's wonderland. Playing outdoors provides many health benefits to children, even in cold weather - as well as great fun! Exposure to sunlight helps provide a child's body with vitamin D. Infectious disease organisms are less concentrated outdoors, so children are less likely to re-breathe the germs that are present in their group environment. And there is no time of year when children don't need fresh air and the physical outlet of active play!

To ensure children's safety in cold weather, take some important precautions. Most are quite simple: dress children in layers; make sure they wear shoes or boots that will keep feet warm and dry; have them wear gloves - or better yet mittens - to protect fingers from frostbite; cover their heads with hats and hoods to keep from losing body heat. Keep the time outdoors to reasonable periods, depending on temperature and wind chill. Check hands and feet frequently for color and warmth. Make sure everyone quickly gets warm and dry when they come back inside.

For more winter safety tips click on the following links:

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/keepingkidssafe/WinterSafety.htm

www.ahsc.health.nb.ca/WinterSafety/wintersafety.htm

These two Canadian sites offer general winter safety tips for children and share Canada's greater experience with severe winters. While NC families may seldom experience most of the activities described, they may also be less aware of the risks and hazards that come with extreme winter weather.

Special advice and guidelines for taking infants outdoors in winter from the *[North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Bulletin, December 2003](#)*

www.bcesmi.org/wintersafety.htm

Advice for parents and caregivers to safeguard themselves, their homes and their vehicles in winter conditions, in order to keep children protected.