

Keeping Warm Indoors

Ways to keep warm

Wear several layers of loose fitting clothing.

- Wear long underwear, sweaters, and even a hat and mittens.
- Wear warm socks. Always wear non-slip slippers or shoes as well to keep from slipping and falling.

Drink warm fluids, like tea or warm water.

Keep blinds and curtains closed to keep the warm air inside the home.

Use towels or blankets to block out cold breezes coming in from under doors and around windows.

Pre-warm your bed with heated water bottles under sheets.

Increase the humidity in the room with a humidifier. Humidity increases room temperature.

Fire Safety

Only use **electric space heaters** or **fireplaces** meant for indoor use.

- Place the heater 3 feet or one metre away from walls, curtains, furniture, papers, and people.
- Always turn the heater or fireplace off before going to sleep or leaving the room.

Make sure your **smoke alarms** have fresh batteries. Check they work correctly by testing them.

Before each **heating** season, make sure get these things cleaned and checked:

- the furnace
- wood, gas, or coal fireplaces

Always watch over fuel-burning fireplaces.

Never use oven or stove to heat your home. This is a safety hazard. It could cause a build-up of toxic fumes.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide poisoning most often happens in the winter. Carbon monoxide is a gas you can't see or smell. It is made when fuel burns such as wood, gasoline, coal, propane, or natural gas. Higher levels of carbon monoxide usually come from faulty appliances that burn fuel such as fireplaces, stoves, and furnaces.

If you have a fuel-burning space heater, only use it outside and in well-ventilated areas such as a covered outdoor patio.

You could have carbon monoxide poisoning if you notice one or more of these signs:

- dull headache
- weakness
- dizziness
- sick to your stomach or throwing up
- feeling short of breath
- confusion
- blurred vision

If you think you have carbon monoxide poisoning, get medical help right away.

Injuries from Cold Exposure

A person can get injuries from exposure to cold temperatures, even from just spending time in a poorly heated place.

Cold injuries can vary from minor ones to very serious ones.

Chilblains (say *chill-blai-nz*) are small, itchy or burning, red patches on your skin. You mostly get them on your fingers and toes. You can get them on your face and legs too. Sometimes people get small blisters as well.

Chilblains usually appear a few hours after you have spent time in cold, but not freezing, temperatures.

Chilblains usually go away on their own in 2 to 3 weeks.

Trench foot happens when your feet are wet for a long time, usually in cold, but not freezing, temperatures.

Trench foot appears slowly over several days. Skin goes from red to pale and swollen. The soles of your feet become wrinkled. As your feet warm up, the skin turns red and hurts, tinkles, or itches.

You might have blisters as well.

As soon as possible, allow your skin to air dry in a warm place, change wet shoes and socks for dry ones, and rest your legs and feet up on pillows.

Frostnip is mild frostbite. It affects skin exposed to below freezing temperatures, such as the chin, cheeks, nose, ears, fingers, and toes.

Frostnip leaves your skin red and numb or tingly.

With frostnip, your skin does not freeze and is not injured. Normal feeling and colour return quickly when you get warm.

Frostbite is when skin exposed to below freezing temperatures freezes.

Frostbitten skin looks waxy white and has no feeling. The skin feels firm or rubbery to touch.

The freezing injures the skin and the tissue under the skin, sometimes down to muscle and bone.

Frostbite is a medical emergency. The damage can be permanent.

How to treat cold exposure

Most cold injuries heal on their own. You can easily take care of yourself at home.

Remain calm. Fear or too much activity causes sweating. Sweating can make you feel chilled.

Cover your head.

Move into a warm area.

Remove wet clothes, hat, gloves, socks and shoes so as soon as you can.

Clean and dry your skin. Gently warm the skin with either body heat or warm water.

Do not rub the skin as this increases damage to skin tissues.

Put on dry clothes. Choose fabrics that insulate well, such as wools and fleece.

Warm up under a heated blanket, if you have one.

Move around a little. Don't be so active that you sweat.

Drink warm fluids like warm milk or water. Stay away from fluids that have caffeine or alcohol in them. Caffeine and alcohol reduce blood flow to the area.

Visit [fraserhealth.ca](https://www.fraserhealth.ca) to learn more about how to stay warm.
Search "[Your Healthy Winter Guide](#)".