



Children's Hospital

HEALTHY

Kidz

A Quarterly Publication for Parents of Pre-schoolers
Volume VII • Winter 2001



Winter safety



Winter is an exhilarating season of the year, beginning with the holidays in November and December. It is a unique time for families to have fun, continue holiday traditions and make memories. Despite the fun and excitement that surrounds wintertime, there are numerous potential safety hazards. Paul Schneider, M.D., pediatric emergency medicine specialist at Children's Hospital, explains ways to keep your children safe through various wintertime activities, both outdoors and indoors.

Q. My children love to play in the snow with their friends. What is the best way to keep them warm and safe?

A. The best way to protect children from cold temperatures is to dress them in layers. Clothing traps warm air next to the body, and multiple layers increase the amount of warm air trapped. You should remove layers as your child warms up. Change clothing as it becomes wet from snow and perspiration, because the moisture

makes it difficult for the body to maintain a warm temperature. Limit outdoor playtime to 30-minute increments in cold weather, and do not allow your children to play outside in extreme conditions. A basic guideline is to keep children inside if the temperature is below the mid-20s Fahrenheit or if a windchill advisory has been issued. Two common conditions in cold weather are hypothermia and frostbite. Hypothermia, or exposure, is a dangerous drop in body temperature. This can be prevented by dressing in warm, dry layers, as described above, and by keeping children well fed on cold days. Calories create energy and keep the body warm. If you suspect that your child is showing signs of exposure, such as shivering, lethargy, and rigid muscles, there are simple steps to take to stop the process and bring body temperature back up. Bring the child inside and dress him or her in dry, warm clothes and cover his or her head. Give your child something warm to drink and call your doctor. If the

child is unconscious, call 911 or take him or her immediately to the nearest emergency room.

Frostbite is damage to the skin due to prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures. Earlobes, fingertips and the tip of the nose are most at risk so try to keep these areas covered when in the cold. Immediate symptoms include a "burning" and tingling sensation, then as the frostbite advances, affected parts will go numb. If your child develops frostbite, see a doctor immediately. If you cannot get your child to a doctor quickly, soak the affected area in warm (not hot) water for 30 minutes. NEVER massage, rub or touch the affected area because the skin is easily damaged.

Q. I have active children who enjoy sledding, skiing and skating once the weather turns cold. How can I prevent accidents during these activities?

A. The Children's Hospital

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Recipes for fun

Your kids are bored, the weather is too yucky to go outside, and they have already played with every toy and game in the house. What's a kid to do? If you are in need of a great activity, you need to go no further than your kitchen and follow these "Recipes for Fun." Just grab your kids and the needed ingredients and start cooking up some fun!

Kool-Aid Playdough

- 2 1/2 cups flour
 - 1/2 cup salt
 - 1 tablespoon alum (found at your local grocery store)
 - 3 tablespoon cooking oil
 - 2 cups boiling water
 - 2 packages unsweetened Kool-Aid
- Mix dry ingredients. Add oil and water, stirring quickly. Store in an airtight container.

Cotton Ball Dough

- 1 cup flour
 - 3/4 cup to 1 cup water
 - 1 bag cotton balls
- Mix flour and water together until you get a smooth paste. Dip the cotton balls into paste. Form into desired shapes. Place on a cookie sheet and bake at 325° for 1 hour until lightly brown and hard. Let cool. Paint shapes with tempera paint.

Stickers

- 1 packet (1/4 oz. or 6.25 g) unflavored gelatin
 - 1/4 cup boiling water
 - 1 tablespoon sugar
 - 1/4 teaspoon food flavoring
- Pour gelatin into a heat-proof container. Add the boiling water. Stir with a fork until gelatin is dissolved. Add sugar until dissolved. Add flavoring such as vanilla, maple or lemon. Stir.
- Cut small pictures from magazines. Spread the gelatin mixture on the back of the picture and let it dry. Moisten the back when you are ready to stick your picture onto cardboard or paper.

Cornstarch Finger Paint

- 1/4 cup cornstarch
 - 3/4 cup water
 - Food coloring or powdered tempera dissolved in water.
- Combine cornstarch with a little of the water in a pot. Stir until a paste is formed. Stir in the rest of the water and continue to stir over low heat. Simmer until clear and thick. Cool. Divide into bowls and blend in coloring.

Face Paint

- 1 tablespoon solid vegetable oil (like Crisco®)
 - 1 teaspoon flour
 - 1 drop food coloring
 - Muffin tin
 - Spoons
- In one section of a muffin tin, mix together shortening, flour and food coloring. Repeat to make several colors in the sections of a muffin tin. Use a finger to paint the face. Wash off with warm water and soap.

Instant Watercolors

- 5 - 7 drops food coloring
 - 2 tablespoons water
- Mix together until completely blended in one of the sections of a muffin tin. Repeat with other colors.

Bubbles

- 2 1/2 quarts water
 - 1/2 cup light corn syrup
 - 1 cup liquid dish detergent
- Mix water and corn syrup together until completely blended. Gently stir in the liquid dish detergent. Store in an airtight container. Will store for several weeks.



Play vs. Academics



Building bridges and cities out of blocks, drawing pictures and painting, and dressing up and playing pretend games are all forms of children's play, yet they are also important ways that children learn.

"Children learn by actively exploring their environment, which is what play is," said Mary Williams Pegler, child development specialist and director of Children's Neighborhood, the Children's Hospital child care center in Farragut. "For example, by playing with blocks a child can learn so much: the concepts of weight, texture, balance and size, just to name a few."

So, for children, play is their work. However, many parents do not realize the importance of play in a child's early development and tend to overemphasize the development of academic skills such as reading and writing. Often these skills are pushed on children before they are actually ready to fully comprehend.

"There is such an emphasis in our society on achievement and success and, unfortunately, this extends to our children," Williams Pegler said. "Often parents push their children to excel academically at very early ages. Because reading and writing are skills that can be measured, adults see the ability to accomplish these skills as the only sign of successful learning."

Some parents do not understand that while children are playing, they are learning important skills

that are part of developing the skills to read, write and do arithmetic. "The ability to read and write is the end result of a long line of skills that must develop first," Williams Pegler explained. "For example, for children to read and write, they must first understand language, which develops from having a lot of different experiences. They need to explore and understand different environments and situations, and this occurs during play. The ability to read depends on the understanding of symbols, and play develops a child's ability to think symbolically.

"Many adults don't understand the difference in children's play and adult's play," Williams Pegler said. "To adults, play means relaxation and recreation from work and learning. Yet play for a child is different. Children are totally absorbed in play; their whole being is involved. They are stimulated in a variety of ways."

Not allowing children the time to play and develop and to just "be children" can create problems. "Many adults have the idea that children need to be little adults by the time they are five or six," Williams Pegler said. "As a result, we have a whole group of children who are growing up stressed and hurried.

"There is no point in pushing skills on children until they are ready—emotionally, socially and intellectually," Williams Pegler said. "By stressing academics with children at an early age, the children's emotional and social needs often are not met.

"As adults, we try to compartmentalize everything, and you just can't do that with children—you must consider the whole child because too much structure to a child's environment at an early age can cause the child to lose some of his creativity, prevent him from taking necessary risks, and stifle his ability to solve problems independently," Williams Pegler continued.

"In our child care center, our philosophy focuses on learning and growing through developmentally appropriate play and interaction with others," Williams Pegler said. "When children leave our program to start school, we expect them to creatively solve problems, to foster their natural curiosity to explore and learn, and to get along with others. These goals can be accomplished through creative, stimulating play."

Chick-fil-A 10-Second Tip

Children need to drink adequate amounts of water to stay healthy. Sodas and fruit drinks contain calories and may not be the best source of nourishment for your child. Ask your pediatrician about the amount of water your child should drink.

Safety, continued from page 1

Emergency Department often treats children for sledding-related injuries during the winter months. Most of these accidents occur when a child on a sled hits a telephone pole or tree or runs into the path of a car. To avoid such accidents, sledders should only sled on open, gentle slopes and avoid steep grades near trees and roads. Always use sleds that are in good condition; split wood and broken parts are safety hazards. Adults should also discourage the building of snow ramps to sled over.

Never skate on a pond or lake if there is any doubt as to the ice thickness; safe ice is at least five inches thick. If possible, skate only at indoor or outdoor skating rinks. Make sure that your children are wearing comfortable skates with good ankle support and sharpened blades.

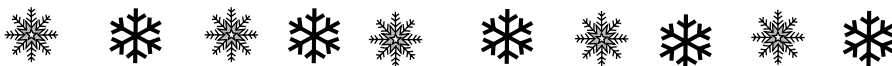
Skiers also need to take a few precautions to maintain safety in their sport. The first rule is to never ski alone; the old adage “there is safety in numbers” is definitely true in a sport like skiing. Use equipment that is in good shape and suited for your size. If you have not skied before, be sure to take beginning level ski lessons offered at most skiing facilities to learn the basics, and never ski on slopes designated for more advanced skiers. It is also important that Children’s heads are protected while skiing; wearing a ski helmet is an easy way to prevent head injuries.

Q. Are there any specific threats to home safety during winter months? How can they be prevented?

A. Along with cold weather comes the need to heat your home, and there are particular dangers that come with this necessity. Several of the methods used to heat homes such as fireplaces and space heaters pose specific safety problems. Some tips to avoid having problems in these areas are to have your fireplace cleaned on an annual basis and guard it with a spark-arresting screen. When purchasing a space heater, choose an electric model and surround it with a spark-arresting screen, and keep it at least three feet from all furniture and curtains as well as other flammable items.

Another home hazard that occurs more often in the winter is carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Excess CO is usually emitted by improperly working fuel burning appliances or water heaters and space heaters. CO is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas, and exposure to CO can be fatal if not detected. Symptoms of CO poisoning include headaches, rosy cheeks, nausea, vomiting, confusion and lethargy. If you think you have been exposed to CO, go outside immediately to breathe fresh air. To protect your family from the dangers of CO poisoning, install CO detectors in bedrooms and near fuel burning appliances in your home. The most effective monitors have a continuous CO level display and alarm.

The key to keeping your family safe during winter months is awareness and caution. Be sure to warn your children of winter hazards outside and within the home. So be extra aware of what your children are doing, follow these simple tips, and your children will remain safe and active for the winter season.



... is a quarterly newsletter for parents, published by East Tennessee Children's Hospital.

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This newsletter is a part of Children's Hospital's Healthy Kids Community Education Campaign, which serves as a resource for parents, offering classes, literature and other opportunities for learning how to improve children's health. For more information about Children's Hospital's Healthy Kids Campaign, please call the community education line at (865) 541-8262.

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