

## **KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN WINTER**

The most important way you can keep your children safe when they are playing outside is supervision.

### Frostbite

- Children should be kept inside if the temperature dips below  $-25\text{ C}$ , regardless of wind chill or with wind chill below  $-28\text{ C}$  regardless of temperature.
- At  $-28\text{ C}$ , exposed skin can freeze in minutes.
- Frostbite occurs when the skin becomes frozen generally at temperatures of  $-4\text{ C}$  or below.
- Frostbite most commonly affects the hands, feet and face.
- When it is cold, it is important for children to take breaks to warm up and drink fluids often.

### Snowballs

- It is recommended that children not participate in snow ball fights.
- Over a 3-year period, the IWK reported 250 injuries due to snow balls.
- 65% of these injuries were to the head, face and neck and of those 50% were eye injuries.

- Most of these injuries happened to boys between 5 and 14 years of age, at school.

### Snow Forts and Tunnels

- When building snow forts, it is recommended that children build forts without roofs as these forts can collapse and children can suffocate.
- Snow banks at the edges of roads can be dangerous places for children, as an oncoming snowplow will not know children are inside.

### Ice Safety

- Children should not play near bodies of water that appear frozen, but may not be solid during the spring thaw or periods of mild weather.
- Clear blue ice is the strongest, white ice is wet snow frozen on top of ice and is about half as strong as blue ice, and grey ice is weak, as there may be much water in the ice, turning it grey.
- Ice thickness should be 15 cm for walking or skating alone, 20 cm for skating parties or games and 25 cm for snowmobiles.

### Clothing

Choose winter clothing with the following guidelines in mind:

- Before venturing out in the cold weather, wear sunscreen. You can still get a sun burn when it is cold.
- Hats should be warm, close fitting and cover the earlobes
- Mittens keep fingers warmer than gloves.
- Always dress in loose layers with a water-resistant outer layer.
- Wear bright-colored clothing to be easily seen.
- Boots should be dry and not too tight.
- Socks – one pair of socks, wool or wool blend is best. Cotton socks provide little or no insulation when wet.
- Remove drawstrings, cords and scarves. These can be strangulation hazards. Instead, choose tubular neck warmers.
- Change out of wet clothes quickly.

### Kids in Cold Cars

Children can be hurt and even killed if left alone in a cold car.

The Canadian climate can be very cold and temperatures inside a car can drop quickly.

#### *Why are children at risk?*

Children three years and younger are at increased risk for cold-related injuries because their heads are proportionately larger than the rest of their bodies and heat is lost quickly from the head.

Children over three are still at risk for cold-related injuries if left alone in a car.

Very cold temperatures in a car can cause children to suffer from:

#### *Hypothermia Shock*

Children have died when they have been left alone in cold cars or became trapped in cold cars.

#### *Did You Know?*

In snowy weather, snow banks can block a car's tailpipe causing the inside of the car to fill with carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide is a gas that has no odor or color but is very harmful.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to death very quickly, in a few minutes' time.

Young children and babies have died when they were left in cars that were running while a parent shoveled the car out from a snow bank or went into the house for a short amount of time.

#### *How to keep children safe in cars during winter months:*

- Never leave a child alone in a parked car or one that is idling.
- Always lock car doors and trunks when you are not using your car and keep keys out of children's reach. Your child or someone else's could get in and get trapped.
- Ensure all children leave the car when you have reached your destination. Remember to remove sleeping babies and children from their car seats.
- Clear snow and ice from around car's tailpipe before starting the car.

#### *Winter Safety Tips*

- advise children to play in an area away from roads, fences and water
- make sure children always wear a hockey or ski helmet while skating
- make sure children wear a hat

because most body heat is lost through the head

- never ski or snowboard alone
- never sled on or near roadways