



State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Public Health

**WEATHERING**

*Winter*



# **WEATHERING** *Winter*



## **Illinois Department of Public Health**

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WEATHERING WINTER was compiled by the  
Illinois Department of Public Health.

The following agencies provided informational materials:

American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency,  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Secretary of State's Office,  
Illinois State Fire Marshal's Office, Illinois Department of Transportation, National Fire Protection  
Association, National Weather Service, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Food and Drug Administration.



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# Preparing for Cold Weather

**S**ome people dread the thought of the thermometer dipping below the freezing mark. Others look forward to the first chill in the air, knowing it means the first snowfall and the holiday season are just around the corner. Snow and ice provide an ideal outdoor playground for children and adults, but also present hazards for those who need to drive or to take part in outdoor activities when the temperature drops. For these reasons, it is important to prepare for winter's arrival by taking the precautions outlined in this booklet before the season has a chance to get the best of you.

## Furnace and Fireplace

### Safety

**P**repare the furnace and fireplace before you use them each year. Many people rely on their furnaces and fireplaces to function properly year after year without cleaning or maintenance. This is a dangerous practice. Every year, more than 8,000 Americans require emergency treatment for injuries associated with furnaces.



Take the following precautions each year before you use your furnace or fireplace for the first time:

- Move all materials that burn easily away from the furnace, including old rags, sawdust, wood scraps and flammable liquids such as gasoline and kerosene. (Because vapors from flammable liquids ignite easily, store these liquids in tightly capped containers.)
- Have a professional inspect your chimney and flue at least once a year and clean them if necessary. Carbon monoxide levels can become dangerous if smoke cannot escape from blocked flues or chimneys. Also, soot in flues and chimneys is highly combustible and can easily ignite, sending a ball

of fire from the furnace or fireplace into the house.

- Change or clean your furnace filter.
- Have a professional check your furnace to be sure it is in good repair. Some furnace services can check to see if the furnace gets enough fresh air. Many homes are over-insulated and lack intake-air piping. This causes the furnace to burn improperly and can reduce the oxygen in your home to a dangerously low level.
- If you have a fireplace, be sure it was made to be used and is not just for decoration.
- Only burn materials designed for a fireplace: Paper can fly out the chimney, coal and charcoal release carbon monoxide, and Styrofoam™ emits a deadly gas. If using artificial logs, burn just one at a time. They may produce more heat than the fireplace can withstand.
- Do not burn wrapping paper in a fireplace. Because wrapping paper ignites suddenly and burns intensely, a flash fire could occur.
- Always use a fireplace screen to prevent hot embers from popping out into the room.
- Do not go to bed or leave the house until you are sure the fire is completely out. Securely shut the fireplace screen or doors.
- Put ashes in a metal container and empty it after each time you clean the fireplace.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home. Test the alarms periodically and change the batteries at least once a year.

## Space Heaters

**T**o decrease heating bills, many people use space, or room, heaters. Misuse of space heaters can put you and your family at risk of fire or burn injuries. In addition, any heater that uses wood, coal, natural gas or kerosene produces carbon monoxide gas, which can be lethal. Adequate ventilation is essential – not just in recreational vehicles and mobile homes, but in any dwelling. Never use charcoal grills or Sterno-type fuels as indoor sources of heat.

Here are some tips if you must use a space heater:

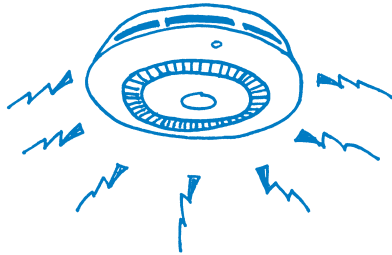
- Follow all instructions and cautions that come with any fuel-burning device.
- All heaters should carry the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Place space heaters at least three feet from any surfaces or materials that burn easily.
- Place space heaters on a level, hard and non-flammable surface, not on rugs or carpets.
- When buying space heaters, look for devices with automatic shut-off

features and heating element guards. Use only heaters that shut off automatically if they tip over and when the room is warmed.

- If you cannot avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene heater in a room, keep the door ajar and crack a window to ensure enough air for ventilation and fuel burning.
- If you have a liquid-fueled space heater, use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never use gasoline or any other substitute fuel. These space heaters are illegal in some areas, so check local ordinances.
- When refueling a space heater, turn off the heater and let it cool down completely before adding fuel.
- Kerosene heaters must be fueled outside. Wipe up any spills promptly.
- Do not sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater. If the heater is not vented, turn it off when you go to bed.
- Check electric heaters for frayed cords or broken filaments.
- Kerosene heaters can use up the oxygen in a room or small house, so use a heater with a sensor that detects the oxygen level.
- Do not leave children or pets unsupervised when a portable space heater is in use. Even the slightest contact with a heating coil or element can cause a severe burn.
- Avoid using extension cords with space heaters. If you must use one, make sure you choose an extension cord of the right wire gauge size and type for your heaters.
- Keep the heater's power supply cord away from high-traffic areas in your home, so people do not walk on or trip over the cord.

## Fire Safety

**B**ecause more and more people have smoke alarms and take other fire prevention steps, the number of deaths and injuries from fires has greatly decreased. Take the following steps to fireproof your home and to prepare your family in the event of a fire:



- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home, at each staircase and near the kitchen and bedrooms. Clean and test them regularly — as often as every two or three months — to ensure the batteries are in good condition.
- Plan two escape routes out of each room. Designate a meeting place outside to account for all family members.
- Teach family members to feel the bottoms of doors and not to open any that are hot.

- Keep a collapsible ladder on the upper floors of the house.
- Keep a whistle in each bedroom so family members can alert others in the house of fire.
- Learn your area's emergency response number — 911 — or the phone number for local police and fire departments. Post these numbers near all phones.

## *Carbon Monoxide Poisoning*

**Y**ou cannot see or smell carbon monoxide (CO), but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes. CO is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. If appliances that burn fuel are maintained and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. However, if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of CO can result. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning appliances.

Symptoms of mild to moderate CO poisoning may resemble winter flu or food poisoning, particularly in children, and include headaches, dizziness, nausea, and lethargy. Mild to moderate CO poisoning also may have longer-term effects on your health. Higher levels of exposure can cause fainting, marked confusion and collapse. If exposure continues, death can result.

When unexplained symptoms persist and affect more than one person in your home and fuel-burning appliances are used, CO poisoning should be considered. This is especially true during the heating season.

Install a battery-operated CO detector near every room used for sleeping purposes and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. CO detectors are not a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel-burning appliances.

If your CO detector alarm sounds, call 911 and leave the area immediately. Never ignore the alarm. Affected individuals should be led to fresh air and provided with oxygen, if necessary. Follow standard first aid practices: Keep victims warm and quiet until help arrives.

After it is safe to return to your home, call a qualified professional to inspect your fuel-burning appliances or other sources of combustion to make sure they are working correctly.



## Prevention is the Key to Avoiding Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Have your fuel-burning appliances, including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves, inspected by a qualified professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that the flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.

- Choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside whenever possible, have them properly installed and maintain them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Do not idle the car in a garage – even if the garage door to the outside is open. Fumes can build up very quickly in the garage and living area of your home.
- Do not use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Do not burn anything in a stove or fireplace that is not vented.
- Do not use gasoline-powered engines (generators, snow blowers, etc.) in your house, garage or other enclosed spaces.
- Do not use a charcoal grill, camping stove or Sterno-type fuel for cooking indoors – even in a fireplace.
- Do not ignore symptoms, particularly if more than one person is experiencing them. You could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing.

## Weather Terms

**W**inter storms may bring freezing rain or sleet, ice or heavy snow. Learn weather terms, and use the radio and television to keep updated on the latest weather conditions.

- Freezing Rain and Freezing Drizzle — Rain that freezes as it strikes the ground and other surfaces, forming a coating of ice.
- Sleet — Small particles of ice, usually mixed with rain.
- Snow Flurries — Periods of snow falling on and off again for short amounts of time. Accumulation is generally limited.
- Winter Storm Watch — A possibility of severe winter conditions exists. Expect freezing rain, sleet or heavy snow, together or separately.
- Winter Storm Warning — Severe winter weather conditions with snowfall of 4 or more inches in a 24-hour period can be expected. Sleet or freezing rain may accompany the snow.
- Travelers' Advisory — Issued when falling, blowing or drifting snow, freezing rain or drizzle, sleet or strong winds may make driving difficult, but conditions are not yet serious enough to issue a winter storm warning.

- Wind Chill — The “feels like” temperature, combining the wind speed and the actual temperature. Knowledge of this helps to determine how you should dress for spending time outdoors.

# Wind Chill Factor

## Understanding Wind Chill

As the speed of the wind increases, it can carry heat away from your body much more quickly. When there are high winds, serious weather-related health problems are more likely, even when temperatures are only cool.

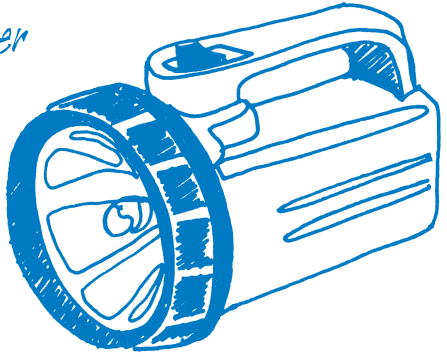
Wind speed  
(m.p.h.)

*Actual air temperature in °F*

	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	-5	-10	-15	-20
▼	<i>Apparent temperature</i>												
4	37	32	26	20	14	8	3	-3	-9	-15	-20	-26	-32
5	36	31	25	19	13	7	1	-5	-11	-16	-22	-28	-34
10	34	27	21	15	9	3	-4	-10	-16	-22	-28	-35	-41
20	30	24	17	11	4	-2	-9	-15	-22	-29	-35	-42	-48
30	28	22	15	8	1	-5	-12	-19	-26	-33	-39	-46	-53
40	27	20	13	6	-1	-8	-15	-22	-29	-36	-43	-50	-57
50	26	19	12	4	-3	-10	-17	-24	-31	-38	-45	-52	-60

## Preparing for Severe Weather

**B**efore severe weather strikes, stock emergency supplies in the event you are snowbound or without electricity for a period of time.



Emergency supplies include the following items:

- Portable radios and flashlights and extra fresh batteries. Make certain these items work.
- A supply of non-perishable food that can be prepared without an electric or gas stove, and emergency cooking equipment and the fuel needed to operate it.
- An emergency supply of water (one gallon per person per day), especially if the standard water supply relies on a water well activated by an electric pump.
- Appropriate clothing, such as insulated underwear, many layers of thin clothing (rather than single layers of thick clothing), mittens (rather than gloves), hats, scarves, boots and warm socks.
- Sufficient heating fuel.
- Emergency heating equipment and fuel (e.g., non-electric heater or gas fireplace). If you plan to rely on a wood burning stove or fireplace, be sure to have a supply of dry, seasoned wood.
- Fire extinguishers. Teach all family members how to use them.
- An ample supply of prescription medicines.

If you are stranded at home and it is necessary to use an alternative form of heat, keep the following in mind:

- Use heating fuel sparingly.
- To conserve fuel, lower the heat and close off rooms that are not in use. Avoid unnecessary opening of doors and windows. Stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors, and close draperies or cover windows with blankets at night.
- When using fuel heating devices, such as kerosene fuel heaters, avoid a build-up of dangerous fumes by maintaining adequate airflow.

## Maintaining Your Water Supply

**E**xtrême cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes rupture. When very cold temperatures are expected —

- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- Keep the indoor temperature warm.
- Improve the circulation of heated air near pipes. For example, open cabinet doors beneath the kitchen sink.

If your pipes do freeze, do not thaw them with a torch. Instead, thaw them slowly by directing the warm air from an electric hair dryer onto the pipes.

If you cannot thaw your pipes, or if the pipes are ruptured, use bottled water or get water from a neighbor's home. As an emergency measure — if no other water is available — snow can be melted for water. Bringing water to a rolling boil for three minutes will kill most microorganisms or parasites that may be present, but will not remove chemical pollutants sometimes found in snow.



## Winterizing Your Car

**C**heck your owner's manual for instructions on getting your car ready for winter. Recommended steps include inspecting the battery and the ignition, as well as the cooling, fuel and exhaust systems. Also, be certain your car is equipped with the necessary items if you should become stranded, and review the following driving tips.

## Safe Winter Driving



**F**ewer daylight hours and the low temperatures that produce slippery road conditions make winter the most hazardous driving season. Drive slower and increase your following distance. Brake gently with a slow, steady stroke, repeated as necessary to maintain control of the car. If your car is equipped with an anti-lock braking system, press and hold the brake to the floor. Do not “pump” the brakes. Let the anti-lock braking system take control of the braking.

Brake early when coming to an intersection or stop. Approach bridges, shaded spots and overpasses slowly as they may remain icy after the rest of the road is clear and dry.

If you begin to slide, do not hit the brakes. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel and steer the car in the direction you want the front to go. Do not touch the brakes or the gas until the tires regain traction. Do not use cruise control.

Before starting even a short trip in bad weather, check the car’s lights, heater, wiper blades, antifreeze and gas tank (which should be full). Chains also may be used in states where they are legal. If you have a cell phone, be sure it is fully charged and take it with you.

It is best not to travel alone, no matter what distance you plan to go. Make sure someone else knows where you are going, the route you plan to take and when you expect to arrive. Travel by daylight, if possible, and use major highways. Keep the car radio tuned to weather and road reports.

If you are stranded, do not panic. Turn on your emergency signal flashers or hang a cloth from the radio aerial or car window. **REMAIN IN YOUR CAR** and wait for help to arrive.

Run your car engine to keep warm, but do so sparingly to conserve fuel. Also, remember to crack a window for proper ventilation and keep the exhaust pipe cleared of snow. Do not let everyone in the car sleep at the same time. One person should watch for rescue crews. To maintain body heat, exercise and keep active as much as possible while remaining inside the car, but do not overexert.

Carry credit cards or extra cash in the event you must stop for overnight lodging or to have your car serviced.

More information on road conditions can be found at [www.dot.state.il.us](http://www.dot.state.il.us) or by calling 800-452-4368.

Before travelling during the winter months, equip your car with the following items:

- Blankets
- Appropriate dress, including-warm mittens and socks, boots, warm hat, insulated underwear, layers of light-weight clothing
- Fresh batteries
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered radio
- Sand and traction mats or old rugs
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper
- Booster cables
- Tool kit
- Tow-line or rope
- Fire extinguisher
- Bottled water
- Coffee cans with lids, to melt snow for water and sanitary purposes
- High-calorie non-perishable food (granola bars, raisins, peanut butter)
- First-aid supplies
- Matches and candles
- Road maps and a compass
- Flares

## Winter Health Problems

### Colds

**T**he “common cold” got its name for good reason: Colds are the world’s most common illness. Few persons manage to escape the viruses that cause a cold. More than 100 such viruses exist. Persons in the United States average three colds every year.

The cold virus usually enters your body through your nose or throat. Then the virus begins to multiply. But a cold infection lasts only a week or two.

You may experience all or some of the symptoms associated with the common cold: sore throat, sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, aches and pains, mild fever, nasal congestion and coughing.

To treat a cold —

- Take a mild pain reliever for the aches and pains and to reduce fever,
- avoid unnecessary activity and get as much bed rest as possible, and
- consume extra amounts of fluids, especially fruit juices.

Although thousands of cough and cold remedies are available over the counter, none of them will prevent, cure or even shorten the course of a common cold.

They only relieve symptoms so you feel more comfortable while you have the cold. Do not take medication that relieves symptoms you do not have.

There is no practical way to avoid catching a cold. There is no vaccine that will protect you from cold viruses. You can, however, take a few measures to lessen your chances of catching cold or to help avoid complications when you do:

- Keep up your natural resistance through good nutrition and plenty of sleep and exercise.
- Keep the thermostat in your home down and the humidity up. Overheating your home dries out the air, which then dries out the mucus membranes in your nose and throat. The membranes can crack, which may allow cold viruses to enter.
- As much as possible, avoid direct contact with those who do have colds.
- Wash your hands frequently.

## Influenza

**I**nfluenza, commonly called the flu, is caused by viruses that infect the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs) and spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Unlike many other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, the flu can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications in some people. The best way to prevent this illness is by getting a flu vaccination each fall.



The flu season usually runs from November until April and often peaks between January and March. While October and November is the best time to be vaccinated, a flu shot can be given any time during the flu season.

Symptoms of flu include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Children can have additional gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, but these symptoms are uncommon in adults. Although the term “stomach flu” is sometimes used to describe vomiting, nausea or diarrhea, these illnesses are caused by other viruses, bacteria, or possibly parasites, and are rarely related to influenza.

Influenza is highly contagious. After a person has been infected with the virus, symptoms usually appear within one to four days, with an average of about two days. Once infected, a person may be contagious from one day prior to

becoming sick to five days after they first develop symptoms. Some young children and people with weakened immune systems may be contagious for longer than a week.

Typical treatment includes getting bed rest, drinking plenty of liquids, avoiding alcohol and tobacco, and taking medication to relieve the symptoms of flu. In some cases, certain antiviral drugs may be prescribed to treat the flu. Influenza is caused by a virus, so antibiotics, such as penicillin, do not cure it. Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever, without first speaking to your doctor.

Typically, those who get the flu recover in a matter of days. However, for the elderly or those who have a chronic health problem, influenza can result in serious complications, such as pneumonia. Persons in these high-risk categories also are more likely to die as a result of the complications of influenza.

While the vaccination is recommended for anyone who wants to avoid getting the flu, particularly adults older than 50 years of age, it is especially important for certain people. The following are those considered most at risk of complications from influenza and for whom a yearly flu shot is strongly recommended:

- Persons 65 years of age and older;
- Children ages 6 months to 59 months of age;
- Residents of long-term care facilities housing persons with chronic medical conditions.
- Persons who have long-term health problems, such as heart disease, kidney disease, lung disease, diabetes, asthma, anemia and other blood disorders.
- Persons with certain muscle or nerve disorders that can lead to breathing or swallowing problems, such as seizure disorders or severe cerebral palsy.
- Persons with a weakened immune system, including immune problems caused by medicine or infection with HIV/AIDS.
- Persons on long-term drug treatment.
- Persons undergoing cancer treatment with X-rays or drugs.
- Children and teenagers 6 months to 18 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy and therefore could develop Reye syndrome after the flu.
- Women who will be pregnant during influenza season.

In addition, those who care for or live with persons at high risk should get a flu shot, including:

- Health care workers (doctors, nurses, hospital and medical staff, personnel of nursing homes or chronic-care facilities, providers of home health care, emergency response workers) who have contact with patients or residents.



- Household members, including children, who live with persons in high-risk groups.
- Care-givers for children younger than 5 years of age.

Allergic reactions to influenza vaccine are rare. However, people who are allergic to eggs, who have had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness), who have an acute illness with fever or who have had a previous allergic reaction to influenza vaccine, should check with their physician before receiving the vaccine.

Because influenza vaccine is only effective for one year and because viruses vary from year to year, it is necessary to get a flu shot every year. The new strains are usually named for the part of the world where they first occurred; hence, they have names such as Russian, Brazil, Hong Kong and Singapore.

In addition to vaccination, the following good health habits can help prevent the flu:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too. If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing; it may prevent those around you from getting sick. Throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water to help protect you from germs, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

## Hypothermia

**H**ypothermia — a drop in body temperature to 95 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or less — can be fatal if not detected promptly and treated properly. In the United States, about 700 deaths occur each year from hypothermia.

The condition usually develops over a period of time, anywhere from a few days to several weeks. Even mildly cool indoor temperatures of 60 degrees to 65 degrees F can trigger hypothermia.

Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk of hypothermia.



Infants younger than 1 year of age should never sleep in a cold room because they lose body heat more easily than adults and because, unlike adults, infants cannot make enough body heat by shivering. Provide warm clothing and blankets for infants and try to maintain a warm indoor temperature. If the temperature cannot be maintained, make temporary arrangements to stay elsewhere. In an emergency, you can keep an infant warm using your own body heat. If you must sleep, take precautions to prevent rolling on the baby. Pillows and other soft bedding also can present a risk of smothering; remove them from the area near the baby.

Older adults often make less body heat because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity. If you are 65 years of age or older, check the temperature in your home often during severely cold weather. Also, check on elderly friends and neighbors frequently to ensure that their homes are adequately heated.

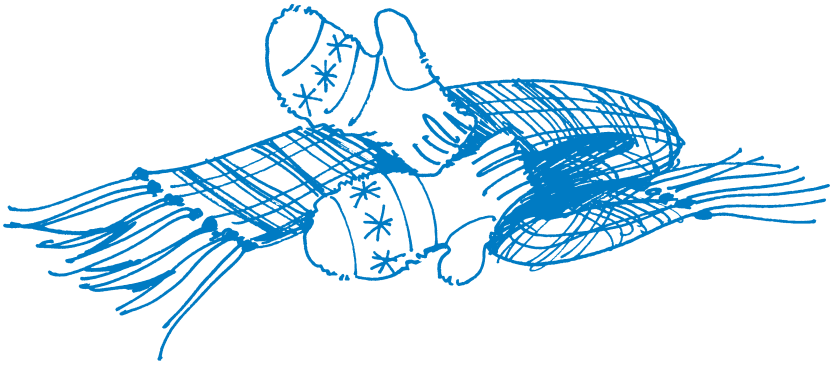
When the body temperature drops, the blood vessels near the surface of the body narrow to reduce heat loss. Muscles begin to tighten to make heat. If the body temperature continues to drop, the person will begin to shiver. The shivering continues until the body temperature drops to about 90 degrees F. If it drops below this point, a life-threatening situation exists.

There are several signs that a person may be suffering from hypothermia. For example, the condition can deprive victims of judgment and reasoning power because the cold affects the brain. Signs to look for are —

- Forgetfulness
- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Change in appearance, such as a puffy face
- Weak pulse
- Slow heartbeat
- Very slow, shallow breathing
- Coma or death-like appearance, if the body temperature drops to or below 86 degrees

If you notice these symptoms in a person, take his or her temperature. If it is 95 degrees F or below, call a doctor or ambulance, or take the victim directly to a hospital. To prevent further heat loss, wrap the patient in a warm blanket. You also can apply a hot water bottle or electric heating pad (on a low setting) to the person's abdomen.

If the patient is alert, give small quantities of warm food or drink. Do not give alcoholic beverages.



Do not give a hypothermia victim a hot shower or bath. It could cause shock.

Do not try to treat hypothermia at home. The condition should be treated in a hospital.

If you have elderly relatives or friends who live alone, encourage them to set their thermostats above 65 degrees F to avoid hypothermia.

## Frostbite



**T**he parts of the body most affected by frostbite are exposed areas of the face (cheeks, nose, chin, forehead), the ears, wrists, hands and feet.

When spending time outdoors during cold weather, be alert for signs of frostbite. Frostbitten skin is whitish and stiff, and the area will feel numb rather than painful. If you notice these signs, take immediate action.

To treat frostbite, warm the affected part of the body gradually. Wrap the frostbitten area in blankets, sweaters, coats, etc. If no warm wrappings are available, place frostbitten hands under your armpits or use your body to cover the affected area. Then seek medical attention immediately.

Do not rub frostbitten areas. The friction can damage the tissue.



Do not apply snow to frostbitten areas. Because its temperature is below freezing, snow will aggravate the condition.

If frostbite occurs, take emergency action to begin warming the affected body part; then seek medical attention immediately.

## Dressing for Cold Weather

**W**hen the temperature drops below freezing and the wind-chill factor is below zero, it is best to stay indoors. But, if you must go outdoors, dress properly for the weather. Follow these suggestions to make yourself more comfortable and protect your body from excessive heat loss:

- Wear several layers of lightweight clothing rather than one or two layers of heavy garments. The air between the layers of clothing acts as insulation to keep you warmer.
- Cover your head. You lose as much as 50 percent of your body heat through your head.
- Wear mittens rather than fingered gloves. The contact of your fingers keeps your hands warmer.
- Wear warm leg coverings and heavy socks or two pairs of lightweight socks.
- Wear waterproof boots or sturdy shoes that give you maximum traction.
- Cover your ears and the lower part of your face. The ears, nose, chin and forehead are most susceptible to frostbite. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect the lungs from directly inhaling extremely cold air.
- Use sunglasses to protect your eyes from winter glare.

## Shoveling Snow

**S**hoveling snow is extremely hard work, especially if you lift large loads and throw the snow some distance away from your body. You should not shovel snow unless you are in good physical condition. Cold weather itself, without any physical exertion, puts an extra strain on your heart.

Know your limits when shoveling snow. Rest frequently and pace yourself. If you become breathless, stop, go indoors and warm up before continuing. If you experience chest or arm pain or numbness, stop immediately and go indoors. Overexertion can cause sore muscles, falls and heart attacks.

Here are some shoveling tips:

- Use a proper snow shovel and lift with your leg muscles, not your back.
- Do not smoke while you are working. Smoking constricts the blood vessels.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages while you work. Alcohol may dull your sense of fatigue and cause you to overwork.
- If you use a snowblower, be sure to have a firm footing before you start it. Remove obstacles from your path and aim the snow carefully. If rocks or chunks of ice are thrown by a snowblower, they may cause injuries or damage property.

- Do not unclog the snowblower chute while the engine is running.
- Do not wear loose clothing, such as a scarf, that may get caught in the snowblower.
- Do not operate the blower over gravel, loose stones or on steep hills to avoid losing control and causing injuries.

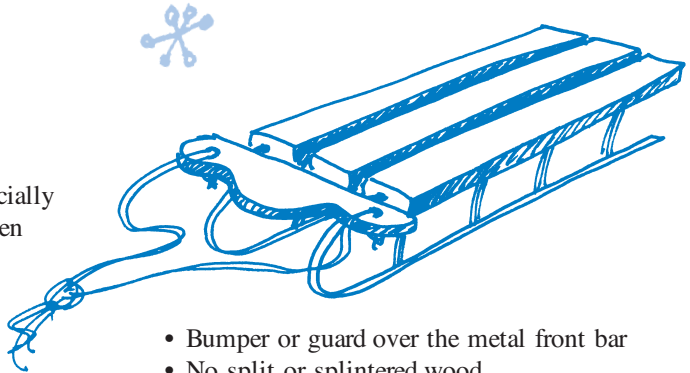
## Winter Sports

**W**inter sports are a lot of fun but, when combined with the cold outdoor weather, can put a great strain on the body. If you participate in winter sports, it is important to be in good physical condition and properly dressed for the weather. It also is important that your equipment is in good condition.

### Sledding

**A** safe sled, especially one that children use, should have these features:

- Secure handholds
- Easy steering
- No protruding rivets
- No sharp edges
- Bumper or guard over the metal front bar
- No split or splintered wood
- No bent metal parts
- Sled runners that curve around to the top and connect with the side rails
- Sharp runners that are free from rust



For safety when sledding, follow these simple rules:

- Look over the area where you will be sledding. Remove any debris from the slope, and note the locations of any bumps. Know how to steer clear of ditches and trees.
- Teach children not to roughhouse, push or shove others.
- Before starting down a slope, make sure the person sledding before you is clear from your path to avoid accidents. And when you reach the bottom, move quickly out of the way.
- When walking back up the slope, use a side path out of the way of other sledders coming down.

- Know how to stop the sled and how to get off a moving sled safely in an emergency.
- Avoid sledding on roads or anywhere near traffic. Do not sled on hills that end in a street.

## Ice Skating

**W**hether you skate on an outdoor pond or at an indoor rink, keep safety in mind and use equipment that fits well. Skates that are too loose can make it difficult to keep your balance. If they are too tight, they can interfere with circulation.

If you skate on a lake or pond, take these additional safety precautions:

- Do not skate unless the ice has a uniform thickness of at least 4 inches.
- Have rescue devices, such as a rope, ladder and blankets, handy.
- Do not skate alone.

## Skiing

**W**hen you buy ski equipment, check for these safety factors:

- Be certain the boots fit snugly, but are not tight enough to interfere with circulation.
- Purchase the ski bindings at the same time you buy the boots to avoid a mismatch.
- If you are a beginner, use short skis and take lessons from a qualified instructor.

Out on the slopes, observe the following rules of safety:

- Never ski alone.
- Give skiers below you the right of way.
- Stop on the side of a ski run, not in the middle. Stay out of the way of skiers coming down behind you.
- Wear bright colored clothing so other skiers can spot you easily.
- Before passing another skier, shout, “On your left” or “On your right.”
- On a lift or tow, carry your poles by the shafts.
- If you fall getting off a lift or tow, get out of the way of skiers exiting behind you as soon as possible.
- When getting off a tow, let go of the T-bar gently so it does not swing back and hit another skier.

## Snowmobiling

**A**s snowmobiling grows in popularity, it is important to keep these safety factors in mind when riding.

Before leaving —

- Check the fuel and oil levels. Keep in mind your return trip.
- Make sure the headlights and taillights work.
- Test the emergency stop switch.
- Move the throttle to make sure it is not frozen in the “on” position, and check the steering system to make sure it moves freely.
- Dress appropriately for the weather. Wear a helmet. Goggles are a must to protect eyes from branches, thorns, snow and cold. Scarves are not recommended because they may get caught in the machinery.
- Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to be back. Never go alone.

Once you start to ride, remember these safety rules:

- Generally, it is unlawful to drive or operate a snowmobile on Illinois roadways. Contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources at 217-782-6431, TTY (hearing impaired use only) 217-782-9175, for complete rules regarding where a snowmobile may be operated.
- Do not drink and operate a snowmobile. Individuals suspected of operating snowmobiles while under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be required to undergo testing. The law is similar to those covering automobile and watercraft operation. An individual convicted of operating a snowmobile while under the influence can face a jail term, fine and suspension of his or her operating privileges.
- Driving a snowmobile is similar to riding a motorcycle or bicycle. Shift body weight to keep your balance. You also can use the throttle and brake to control the machine.
- Be prepared for changing weather conditions.
- Be careful on ice and travel at low speeds.
- Do not travel on lakes or rivers without knowing the ice conditions. To be safe, there should be 8 inches of clear ice. It is best, however, to avoid snowmobiling on waterways all together.
- If you travel onto ice that breaks, reach forward to the edge of the ice and pull yourself forward. Do not stand; roll yourself to firm ground.
- Do not stop the snowmobile when it is pointing uphill because it may become stuck.

- Be cautious going downhill. Keep the snowmobile under control and be prepared to stop.
- If you have a passenger, both persons' feet should be kept on the running board. The person should lean with you when you turn.
- Use a rigid tow bar, never a rope or wire, to tow a person in a snowmobile sled. This will protect the sled from crashing into the snowmobile during a sudden stop or sharp turn.
- Use the proper hand signals when turning left or right or when stopping.
- When riding at night, make sure lights are working. Do not travel on unfamiliar ground and carry a flashlight or flare for emergencies.
- Day or night, be alert for hidden wires or objects.

## *Holiday Safety*

**D**uring the busy holiday season, try not to overlook steps that can help make the holidays healthier and safer.

### *Holiday Cooking*

**M**ost food poisonings are preventable if you follow these very important rules: Keep hot food hot and cold food cold, keep everything in the kitchen clean, and wash hands often during food preparation and service.

Refrain from eating certain foods, such as raw oysters, egg drinks, mousse or bread pudding (unless made with pasteurized eggs or an egg substitute); soft-boiled eggs; steak tartare; and rare or medium hamburger. These foods can harbor bacteria that cause food poisoning. It is particularly important that young children, the elderly, pregnant women and those who are ill or whose immune systems are compromised not eat raw or undercooked animal products or raw oysters unless they have consulted a physician.

Most bacteria get into food through careless handling. Hands should always be washed before handling food, and towels and wash cloths should be kept clean as bacteria can linger in those used repeatedly between launderings. Counter tops and utensils should be washed with hot, soapy water between each step in food preparation. Bacteria from raw meat and poultry can get into other foods if they touch the same surfaces. Also, be cautious not to use wooden utensils or cutting boards for raw meat and poultry. These surfaces are not smooth and can harbor bacteria in the ridges. Any time you use wooden utensils or cutting boards, they should be scrubbed thoroughly with soapy water and rinsed well before and after each use. Do not use them at all if the utensil or board is scored or cut.



Cooking food thoroughly kills most bacteria that cause food poisoning. Refrigerate cooked food you do not serve immediately. Do not leave food unrefrigerated longer than two hours or the chances of bacterial growth increase.

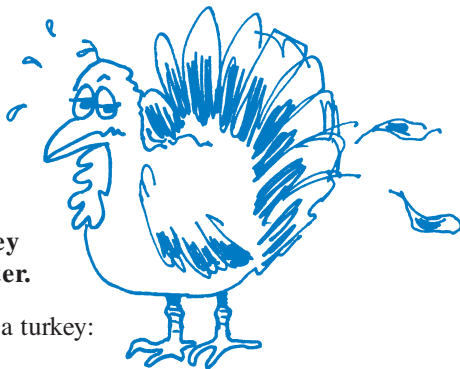
Because many warm-blooded creatures, including turkeys and other poultry, often harbor Salmonella organisms, proper thawing and cooking are important in order to avoid foodborne illness.

Follow these guidelines to prepare and to serve meat and poultry:

- Cook meat and poultry to the temperature indicated in the chart to make sure it is cooked thoroughly. Use a meat thermometer, inserting the tip into the thickest part of the meat and avoiding fat or bone. For poultry, insert the tip into the breast or the thick part of the thigh next to the body.
- Partial cooking may allow bacteria to grow, so cook meat and poultry completely at one time.
- If meat or poultry is frozen, thaw before cooking. Turkey should always be completely thawed before cooking.
- Cover leftovers to reheat. This helps maintain moisture and ensures meat is heated all the way through.
- Do not cool leftovers on the kitchen counter. Divide them into smaller portions to cool more quickly and put them in the refrigerator as soon as possible.

## *Turkey Preparation*

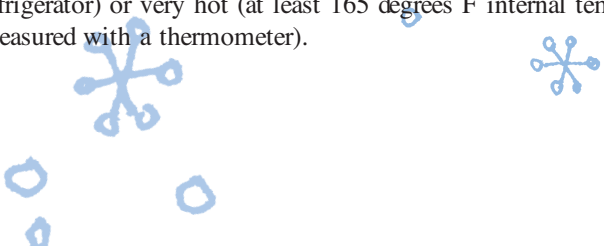
**REMEMBER! Always wash hands, utensils, the sink, and anything else that comes in contact with raw turkey and its juices with soap and water.**



**F**ollow these guidelines to prepare a turkey:

- Start early and thaw the turkey in the refrigerator or in a place where the air temperature is no higher than 40 degrees. Allow approximately 24 hours of thawing time for every 4-pounds to 5-pounds of turkey. A 4-pound to 12-pound turkey takes one- to three-days to thaw completely in a refrigerator, a 12-pound to 16-pound turkey takes three- to four-days, a 16-pound to 20-pound turkey takes four- to five-days and a 20-pound to 24-pound turkey takes five- to six-days.

- Set your oven temperature no lower than 325 degrees F.
- Be sure the turkey is thawed completely, until no ice appears in the inner cavity and the meat is soft. Be cautious: If the inner cavity is still frozen or even partially frozen when you put the turkey in the oven, the outside of the bird will be done before the inside. This means the inside temperature will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria.
- Place your turkey or turkey breast on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.
- For optimum safety, stuffing a turkey is not recommended. For more even cooking, it is recommended you cook your stuffing outside the bird in a casserole. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the stuffing. The stuffing must reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees F.
- If you choose to stuff your turkey, the ingredients can be prepared ahead of time; however, keep wet and dry ingredients separate. Chill all of the wet ingredients (butter/margarine, cooked celery and onions, broth, etc.). Mix wet and dry ingredients just before filling the turkey cavities. Fill the cavities loosely. Cook the turkey immediately. Use a food thermometer to make sure the center of the stuffing reaches a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees F.
- A whole turkey is safe when cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees F as measured with a food thermometer. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook turkey to higher temperatures.
- If your turkey has a “pop-up” temperature indicator, it is recommended that you also check the internal temperature of the turkey in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast with a food thermometer. The minimum internal temperature should reach 165 degrees F for safety.
- After the meal, discard any turkey, stuffing, and gravy left out at room temperature longer than 2 hours; 1 hour in temperatures above 90 degrees F. Divide leftovers into smaller portions. Refrigerate or freeze in covered shallow containers for quicker cooling. Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within 3- to 4-days. Use gravy within 1-to 2-days. If freezing leftovers, use within 2- to 6-months for best quality.
- It is important to serve leftover turkey either very cold (directly from the refrigerator) or very hot (at least 165 degrees F internal temperature as measured with a thermometer).



# Cooking Meat and Poultry

Meat and poultry cooked throughout to these temperatures are generally safe to eat.

	Celsius	Fahrenheit
<b>Fresh Beef</b>		
Medium Rare .....	63	145*
Medium .....	71	160
Well Done .....	77	170
Ground Beef .....	71	160
<b>Fresh Veal</b>		
Medium Rare .....	63	145*
Medium .....	71	160
Well Done .....	77	170
<b>Fresh Lamb</b>		
Medium Rare .....	63	145*
Medium .....	71	160
Well Done .....	77	170
<b>Game</b>		
Deer .....	74	165
Rabbit .....	82	180
Duck .....	82	180
Goose .....	82	180
<b>Ratites</b>		
Ostrich .....	71	160
Rhea .....	71	160
Emu .....	71	160
<b>Eggs</b>		
Fried, poached .....	(cook until yolk and white are firm)	
Casseroles .....	71	160
Sauces, custards .....	71	160
<b>Fresh Pork – Chops, Roast, Ribs</b>		
Medium .....	71	160
Well Done .....	77	170
<b>Poultry</b>		
Chicken .....	74	165
Turkey .....	74	165
Turkey Roasts (boneless) .....	77	170
Stuffing (inside or outside bird) .....	74	165
<b>Cured Pork</b>		
Ham, Fresh .....	71	160
Sausage, Fresh .....	71	160

\* Note: Home cooking temperatures are slightly higher than commercial cooking temperatures to provide a safety margin in case of variation in the accuracy of home thermometers.

Consumer guidelines from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Services; and U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Toy Safety

**A**lthough fewer and fewer hazardous toys are on the market each year, adults still must choose toys wisely. Too often, adults select toys that appeal to them rather than choosing an appropriate toy for the child.

Nationally, each year, hundreds of thousands of children are injured by toys that may have seemed safe. The most important rules for safe toy giving are to pay attention to age guidelines and to select toys suited for the child.



To select appropriate and safe toys—

- Check the label for the age recommendations. Toys recommended for children older than 3 years of age may contain small parts that could present a choking hazard to a younger child.
- Choose toys the child can handle. Just because a toy is recommended for 8-year-olds does not mean every 8-year-old is mature enough to operate it.
- Think about how much adult supervision the toy will require and whether that supervision will be available.

Think **BIG** when selecting toys—especially for children younger than 3 years old. In general, the ideal toy for a very young child is one that—

- Has smooth, rounded edges
- Is too large to swallow
- Has no exposed pins, wires or nails
- Has no detachable parts that could become lodged in a child's windpipe, ear or nostrils
- Does not contain pieces, such as darts or arrows, that can be thrown or shot at another person
- Is not electric
- Is not made of material, such as glass or brittle plastic, that will crack or shatter easily

Around the house, keep toys used by older children — such as games with small pieces, marbles and small balls — away from young children. Keep uninflated balloons out of the hands of children younger than 6 years of age and discard pieces of broken balloons to avoid a choking accident.

Although the following items are not classified as toys, keep safety in mind when purchasing them:

- Gates and enclosures should have openings no more than 1½ inches wide to prevent a child's head from getting trapped. When installing a gate in a doorway or stairway, make sure it is securely anchored.
- High chairs should have a wide base for stability and restraints that are strong and easy to operate. Always use the restraints.
- Playpens should have a mesh netting with weave smaller than the buttons on baby's clothing. Space between slats on a wooden playpen should be no more than 2⅝ inches wide.
- Rattles, squeeze toys and teethers should not have small ends that can reach the back of baby's mouth. Remove these items from the playpen or crib when baby is sleeping and never tie them around baby's neck.
- Toy chests should have hinges that will support the lid open in any position. Other types of lids may fall on the child's head, causing serious harm or death. Toy chests should also have ventilation holes that are not blocked if the chest is placed against the wall.
- Walkers should not be used near stairs where the child can fall down. Walkers also can tip over when the child attempts to move from a hard floor to a carpeted area. Children have lost fingers in older walkers with X-frames that are like scissors when closed. Never leave a child unattended in a walker.

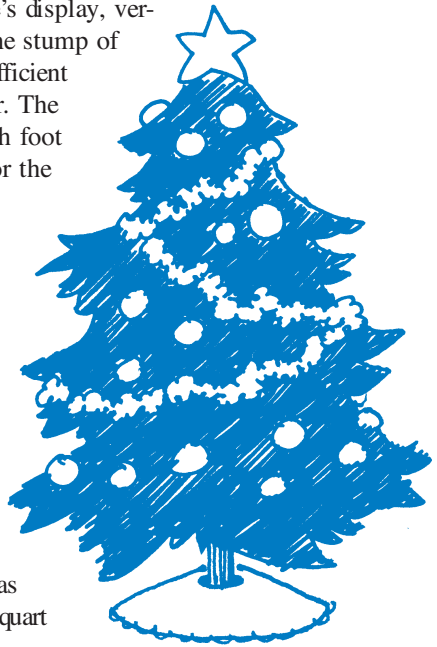
For more information on children's product safety, visit the Department's Web site at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/webapp/SRSApp/pages/index.jsp>.

## *Christmas Tree Safety*

**K**eeep the fun in decorating for the holiday season. Remember these safety tips when selecting a Christmas tree and other live holiday decorations:

- The safest tree is a fresh one. And the freshest tree is one that you buy from a tree farm where you choose and cut down your own tree.
- Know the tree seller. A dealer's reputation and the length of time in business can help to assure the quality of tree you purchase.
- Ask questions about the tree's freshness, such as when it was cut, where it came from, and how it was transported and stored. Trees exposed to wind and sun for two to three weeks and then transported uncovered from the northern states tend to be dangerously dry.
- Bending needles is not always an accurate test for dryness because needles may retain their moisture even though the tree's moisture content is low.

- Know the space available for the tree's display, vertically and horizontally. Make sure the stump of the tree is long enough to provide sufficient support and to soak up enough water. The stump should be 1 inch long for each foot of height to provide enough water for the tree.
- Saw  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch off the bottom of the trunk to expose new wood that will absorb water easily. Until you are ready to put up the tree, set the tree in water out of the wind. Check the water level daily.
- When you put up the tree, be sure to use a sturdy stand that holds water.
- Check the water level in the stand several times each week and add water as necessary. Healthy Christmas trees may absorb water at a rate of a quart or more each day.
- Do not display the tree near heat outlets, or be sure to close off heat vents that would blow directly on the tree.
- If you have an artificial tree, make certain it is flame retardant.



## Lights

**W**hile lights can add a sparkle to your Christmas tree or home, they can also add a spark. Remember these safety tips when using lights:

- Do not use indoor lights out-of-doors. All outdoor lights should be weather-proofed.
- Inside or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety. Look for a label from an independent testing laboratory.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bared wires, worn insulation or loose connections. Discard damaged sets or repair them before using.
- Do not overload electrical outlets. Check the power capacity of your home and stay within the wattage limits. Use extension cords sparingly.
- All electrical decorations, including lights, should be turned off before leaving home or going to bed.
- Decorative lights should never be used on metallic trees. Candles should never be used on trees.

## Trimming

**D**eck the halls with safety during the holiday season:

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials.
- Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass “angel hair” to avoid irritation to eyes and skin.
- Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or non-leaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

In homes with small children, special care needs to be taken:

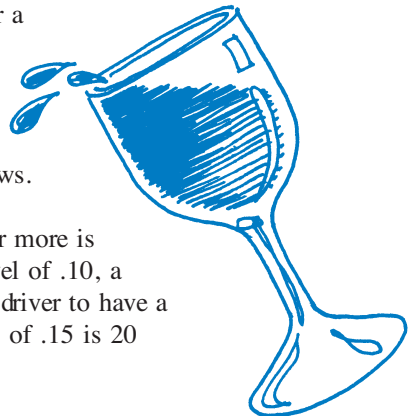
- Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable.
- Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children. Pieces could be swallowed or inhaled.
- Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food. A child could eat them.

## Drinking and Driving and Alcohol Consumption

**A**lthough drunk driving is a year-round problem, it can be more common during the holiday season. With the holidays come holiday celebrations and parties where alcohol is served.

Each year, nationally, nearly 17,000 persons die in alcohol-related crashes — one every 30 minutes. Someone is injured in an alcohol-related crash about every two minutes.

Alcohol is a drug that depresses the central nervous system and slows the activity of the brain and spinal cord. Therefore, one drink can slow a driver’s reflexes and make the car a dangerous weapon. From the first drink, alcohol begins to affect coordination and judgment. Vision and depth perception become distorted, emotions and moods become unpredictable, and reaction time slows.



A driver with a blood alcohol level of .08 or more is considered legally drunk in Illinois. At a level of .10, a driver is six times more likely than a sober driver to have a crash and a driver with a blood alcohol level of .15 is 20 times more likely to have a crash.

Alcohol's effect on an individual is determined primarily by two factors: the amount of alcohol consumed and the rate at which it is absorbed. Other contributing factors include body weight, alcohol tolerance, mood, environment and the amount of food consumed.

Shortly after a person starts to drink, the body begins to rid itself of the alcohol. The process is slow, but eventually all the alcohol will be filtered out, mainly by the liver, which is responsible for removing about 90 percent of it. The elimination rate is equal to about one drink per hour. There is nothing — not coffee, nor showers or food — that can speed up the process. It does not matter if the person is asleep or awake.

To lessen the amount of alcohol absorbed by the bloodstream —

- Eat before you begin drinking. A full stomach helps slow the rate of absorption.
- Drink slowly to give your body time to handle the alcohol. Space your drinks.
- Know what you are drinking. Do not accept a drink if you do not know what is in it. Also, do not leave your drink unattended.
- Before your first drink, set a reasonable limit on the number of drinks you will have and then stick to it.
- If you are driving, stop drinking at least two hours before you drive. This will give your body time to burn up some of the alcohol you have consumed.
- If you are the host or hostess, serve food and stop serving alcohol a few hours before you expect the party to end. Offer non-alcoholic drinks for non-drinkers and designated drivers. Do not let a guest who has been drinking heavily drive home. Call a taxicab, have a sober friend drive or urge the guest to spend the night.





Copies will be furnished free of charge upon request.  
To obtain copies, please contact—



## Illinois Department of Public Health

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