

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR EXTREME COLD CONDITIONS

Baie-Comeau, January 10, 2022 – Given the very cold weather expected in the coming days, the Direction de santé publique de la Côte-Nord would like to deliver some recommendations to the population.

Exposure to extreme cold may pose a serious risk of frostbite or hypothermia. Seniors, young children, outdoor workers, snowmobilers and people who take part in long hikes and mountain activities are particularly vulnerable to cold weather. Moreover, people who suffer from heart or respiratory failure, angina pectoris, asthma, diabetes and neurological disorders may aggravate their symptoms if they are exposed to extreme cold. Homeless people, mobility-impaired people and people who take medication or who suffer from psychiatric disorders are also at risk.

The Direction de santé publique recommends that you avoid staying outside for long periods, especially in windy conditions. The combination of cold and wind considerably increases the risk of frostbite, which may occur after 10 to 30 minutes of exposure for an adult when temperatures hover around -28 °C. Children should also stay inside if the temperature or wind chill drops to -27 °C or below.

Recommended measures

If you must go outside during extreme cold:

- Dress in several layers of clothing. The top layer must be windproof and waterproof.
- Make sure that you cover your head, nose, mouth, neck, hands and feet well. Wear boots that will keep your feet warm and prevent you from slipping and falling.
- Stay active – walk constantly, for example.
- Limit vigorous physical exertion, such as shovelling snow or running.
- If you must stay outside for a long time, take breaks in a warm place that is sheltered from the wind.
- Avoid getting your clothes wet. If they get wet, change them as soon as possible. You can also remove a layer of clothing as soon as you start to sweat.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol, as it may lower your body temperature even more and lead to hypothermia, for example.
- At all times when you are outside, pay attention to the following warning signs: shivering, chills, tingling of the skin, numbness, and very red or white skin. In the presence of one of these symptoms, get inside immediately to warm up. In case of frostbite or hypothermia, contact Info-Santé at 811 as soon as possible to learn about the first aid to provide.

If you are at home:

- Heat your house as usual, and keep the room temperature at 19 °C or above.
- Caulk doors and windows to prevent cold air from coming in.
- If you use a wood stove or an auxiliary heating system, make sure the room is well ventilated to avoid [carbon monoxide](#) poisoning. If you have to use a generator (in the event of a power outage, for example), install it outside your home or any other inhabited building.

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If you plan to travel by vehicle (car, all-terrain vehicle or snowmobile):

- Bring warm clothing and blankets in case of a breakdown or accident, a cell phone that works and that is charged, a shovel, a snow brush and traction aids.
- When snowmobiling, travel in groups of at least two snowmobilers.

For more information, visit <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/advice-and-prevention/health-and-environment/preventing-the-harmful-effects-of-cold-temperatures>.

Source: Pascal Paradis
Communication advisor
Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord
418 589-9845, ext. 342268