 Whether winter brings severe storms, light dustings or just cold temperatures, the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** has some valuable tips on how to keep your children safe and warm.

**What to Wear**

* Dress [**infants**](http://www.healthychildren.org/english/ages-stages/baby/Pages/default.aspx) and [**children**](http://www.healthychildren.org/english/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/default.aspx) warmly for outdoor activities.  Several thin layers will keep them dry and warm. Don’t forget warm boots, gloves or mittens, and a hat.
* The rule of thumb for older babies and young children is to dress them in one more layer of clothing than an adult would wear in the same conditions.

**Hypothermia**

* Hypothermia develops when a child's temperature falls below normal due to [**exposure to colder temperatures**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Extreme-Temperature-Exposure.aspx). It often happens when a youngster is [**playing outdoors**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Playing-Outside-in-Cold-Weather.aspx) in extremely cold weather without wearing proper clothing or when clothes get wet. It can occur more quickly in children than in adults.
* As hypothermia sets in, the child may shiver and become lethargic and clumsy.  Speech may become slurred and body temperature will decline in more severe cases.
* If you suspect your child is hypothermic, [**call 911**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Calling-911-How-and-When-to-Call-for-Help.aspx) at once. Until help arrives, take the child indoors, remove any wet clothing, and wrap him in blankets or warm clothes.

**Frostbite**

* [**Frostbite**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Frostbite-Prevention.aspx) happens when the skin and outer tissues become frozen.  This condition tends to happen on extremities like the fingers, toes, ears and nose. They may become pale, gray and blistered. At the same time, the child may complain that his/her skin burns or has become numb.
* If frostbite occurs, bring the child indoors and place the frostbitten parts of her body in warm (not hot) water. 104° Fahrenheit (about the temperature of most hot tubs) is recommended. Warm washcloths may be applied to frostbitten nose, ears and lips.
* Do not rub the frozen areas.
* After a few minutes, dry and cover the child with clothing or blankets. Give him/her something warm to drink.
* If the numbness continues for more than a few minutes, call your doctor.

**Winter Health**

* If your child suffers from winter [**nosebleeds**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/ear-nose-throat/Pages/Chronic-Nosebleeds-What-To-Do.aspx), try using a cold air humidifier in the child's room at night. Saline nose drops or petroleum may help keep nasal tissues moist. If bleeding is severe or recurrent, consult your pediatrician.
* Cold weather does not cause [**colds**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/ear-nose-throat/pages/Children-and-Colds.aspx) or [**flu**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/The-Flu.aspx). But the viruses that cause colds and flu tend to be more common in the winter, when children are in school and are in closer contact with each other. Frequent [**hand washing**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Hand-Washing-A-Powerful-Antidote-to-Illness.aspx) and teaching your child to sneeze or cough into the bend of her elbow may help reduce the spread of colds and flu.
* Children 6 months of age and up should get the [**influenza vaccine**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/vaccine-preventable-diseases/Pages/Flu-(Influenza).aspx) to reduce their risk of catching the flu.

**Winter Sports and Activities**

* Set reasonable time limits on outdoor play to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Have children come inside periodically to warm up.
* Using [**alcohol**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Alcohol-The-Most-Popular-Choice.aspx) or [**drugs**](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Drugs-of-Choice-for-Teens.aspx) before any winter activity, like snowmobiling or skiing, is dangerous and should not be permitted in any situation.