

## Your health this winter

Last updated: **January 2024**

With cooler temperatures, shorter days and the flu and cold season, winter may bring changes to our health. Many of us may find it hard to get enough physical activity. The snow and ice can create hazards that can make walking, playing and working outdoors difficult. Many of us will come down with the flu or catch a cold. Throughout the winter, it is important that we continue to stay active, eat healthy, and take care of our families and ourselves.

Learn about staying healthy and safe this season.

### Be prepared

PreparedBC is British Columbia's one-stop shop for disaster readiness information. For tips on seasonal readiness, how to prepare an emergency plan and what to include in an emergency kit, visit PreparedBC: Public emergency preparation and recovery - [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc).

- Follow PreparedBC on [Facebook](#)
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For emergency info BC advisories, visit: [www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca)

### Emergency shelters

[Emergency shelter program - www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/emergency-shelter-program](http://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/emergency-shelter-program) provides a temporary place to sleep, eat and wash for anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Some shelters may offer additional services such as meals, secure areas for belongings and a resource room with computers, phone or TV. Access to medical support, support staff and individualized help from a caseworker may be available. Find emergency shelter information and resources, including extreme weather shelters here:

- [BC Housing: Shelter map](#)
- [2-1-1 Shelter and street help line](#)

### Warming centres

Warming centres and emergency shelters can provide protection from [Hypothermia and cold temperature exposure](#) during extreme cold weather. Emergency warming centres and general warming spaces locations may be listed on [EmergencyMapBC.ca](http://EmergencyMapBC.ca) at the discretion of First Nations and local governments. If warming centres are not listed on the map in your area, contact your band office or local government, or visit CivicInfo BC: Directories - [www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories](http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories), or visit BC Housing for temporary winter and extreme weather response shelter information website - <https://smap.bchousing.org>.

## Featured Topics

### Common illnesses and injuries during winter

Colds and flu, and some conditions and illnesses are more common or are worse during the winter months. The holidays can also be a stressful time for many people and may cause some of us to experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD). In addition, the snow and ice can create hazards that increase the risk of falling and hurting yourself. To learn more about some of these common conditions, visit [Common illnesses and injuries during winter](#).

### Cold weather

Throughout the winter, temperatures will drop and it may be very cold outside. Learn about cold exposure and the steps you can take to protect yourself and your family:

- [Cold Exposure: Ways the body loses heat](#)
- [Cold Exposure: What increases your risk of injury?](#)
- [Cold temperature exposure](#)
- [Dry skin and itching](#)
- [Hypothermia and cold temperature exposure](#)

### Healthy living during winter

Healthy eating and physical activity promotes and supports social, physical, and mental well-being for everyone, at all ages and stages of life. For advice on what you can do to live a healthy lifestyle, visit the [Healthy living during winter](#) page.

### When to visit the emergency room

The Emergency Room (ER) in hospitals can be very busy during winter months. Prepare and learn when you or a family member may need to use the ER. To learn more, see:

- [BC Children's Hospital: When to bring your child to the BC Children's emergency department](#)
- [Fraser Health Authority: The cold facts on childhood fevers](#)
- [Fraser Health Authority: Your healthy winter guide 2022/23](#)
- [When to visit the emergency room](#)

### Useful websites

#### BCCDC: Safer celebrations and ceremonies

With COVID-19 still a concern across the province, here are some things you can consider for [safer social interactions](#).

## Fraser Health Authority

For tips to keep you fit, healthy and happy over winter, visit [Your healthy winter guide](#).

## Island Health

For tips to keep you fit, healthy and happy over winter, visit [Holiday wellness: Tips to stay safe this season](#).

## Vancouver Coastal Health

[Put your health first this winter](#). As temperatures drop, the number of patients seeking care at emergency departments and community health-care facilities tends to rise. This season, more than ever, it's vital to proactively manage your health and well-being. It's essential to recognize when it's time to seek medical help, and just as important to know how to care for yourself and avoid the need for medical care where possible.

For ways to prevent falls this winter, see [Fall prevention tips](#).

## ImmunizeBC

ImmunizeBC works to improve the health of British Columbians and reduce the number of infections by vaccine-preventable diseases. They provide information on immunizations to individuals, families and health care providers. They also provide tools to make it easier for B.C. families to get immunized:

- [A parent's guide to vaccination \(PDF 1.72 MB\)](#)
- [Get immunization reminders by text message!](#)
- [ImmunizeBC](#)
- [Public health unit finder](#)

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For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles) or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.