WINTER SAFETY GUIDE

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CCHD Clinton County HEALTH Department
STAYING WELL
Wash your hands

Germs are everywhere! They get onto your hands and items you touch throughout the day. Germs can get into your body through your eyes, nose and mouth and make you sick. Studies have shown that handwashing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea-related sicknesses and 1 in 5 respiratory infections, such as a cold or flu.

Washing your hands at key times with soap and water is one of the most important steps you can take to get rid of germs and avoid spreading them. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Handwashing steps:
1. Wet your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
3. Scrub all surfaces of your hands for at least 20 seconds (including the palms, backs, between your fingers, and under your nails).
4. Rinse your hands under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

When should you wash your hands?

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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>Preparing food</td>
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<td>Eating food</td>
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<td>Caring for someone who is sick</td>
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<td>Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing</td>
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<td>Touching garbage</td>
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<td>Touching something greasy or dirty</td>
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Other good health habits

- **Avoid close contact** with sick people.
- **Stay home when you're sick.** If you or your child gets sick, stay at home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine (e.g., Tylenol or ibuprofen).
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue (or your elbow) when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose or mouth.
- ** Routinely clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces and objects at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, phones).
- **Practice all good health habits.** Stay smoke-free, eat nutritious foods, drink plenty of fluids, stay active, manage stress, and get enough sleep.
To take or not to take...

‘Busy’ is a way of life for most Americans. Work, family, the list of things to do is never ending. The last thing you need is to get sick. When illness strikes, do you really need that antibiotic?

**Antibiotics:**

- **Are only needed for treating infections caused by bacteria,** but even some bacterial infections get better without antibiotics. Antibiotics are not needed for many sinus infections and some ear infections.
- **Do not work on viruses,** such as those that cause colds, flu, bronchitis, or runny noses (even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green).
- **Will not make you feel better if you have a virus.** Respiratory viruses (such as a cold) usually go away in a week or two without treatment. Ask your healthcare provider about the best way to feel better while your body fights off the virus.
- **Will not help you when they aren’t needed,** and the side effects could cause harm. Side effects range from minor to very severe health problems. When you need antibiotics for a bacterial infection, the benefits usually outweigh the risk of side effects.
- **Can lead to antibiotic resistance,** which occurs when bacteria develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them.
- **Should be taken exactly as prescribed.** Talk with your doctor if you have any questions.

What’s the best way to prevent seasonal flu? Get vaccinated every year!

- **Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older** who do not have contraindications.
- After getting the flu vaccine, **it takes about 2 weeks** for your body to develop antibodies that will protect you from the flu.
- Children 6 months to 8 years of age may need **2 doses** during the same flu season; everyone else needs only **1 dose** each flu season.
- A flu vaccination does not guarantee protection against the flu. Some people who get vaccinated might still get sick. However, people who get a flu vaccine are **less likely to get sick** with the flu or be hospitalized from flu than someone who does not get vaccinated.
- Flu vaccines have been updated to better match circulating viruses. The **nasal spray flu vaccine** is an option for otherwise healthy persons aged 2-49 years who are not pregnant.
- Recommendations for people with **egg allergies** are the same as the 2017-18 flu season.

**Flu symptoms vary by age but can include:**

- fever* or chills
- headache
- runny or stuffy nose
- sore throat
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- cough
- vomiting or diarrhea**

*Not everyone with the flu has a fever.
**More common in children than adults.

For more information visit: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).
HOME SAFETY

Many people prefer to stay indoors during the winter months, but even inside, safety is not guaranteed. Listen to weather forecasts regularly and take steps to prepare your home for cold weather, winter storms and power outages.

Weatherproof your home

- **Insulate** walls and attic.
- **Caulk and weather-strip** doors and windows.
- **Install storm windows** or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- **Insulate any water lines** that run along outer walls. This will make water less likely to freeze.
- **Service snow-removal equipment.**
- **Have your chimney or flue inspected.**
- **Clean out gutters and repair roof leaks.**
- **Cut away tree branches** that could fall on your home or other structure during a storm.

Prepare before a storm

- **Sign up for local alerts and warning systems.**
- **Store water** in clean containers.
- **Fully charge your cell phone.**
- **Make an emergency supply kit.** You should have enough supplies to sustain yourself, your family and your pets for at least 3 days).
- **Stock food** that needs no cooking or refrigeration.
- **Talk to your medical provider** about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity (such as oxygen concentrators) and refrigerated medicines. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures.

Act during a storm

- **Monitor the weather reports.**
- **Turn off or disconnect** unneeded appliances, equipment, or electronics. Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
- **Check on family and neighbors** who may be at a higher risk from cold weather hazards (especially young children and older adults).
- **If you have pets, bring them inside.** If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate, warm shelter and unfrozen water to drink.
- **Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40°F or higher** for 2 hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture. Never taste foods to decide if they are safe. **“When in doubt, throw it out!”**

**Emergency Supply Kit:**

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<td><strong>Water</strong> (1 gallon per person per day)</td>
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<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Manual can opener and basic utensils to prepare and serve meals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Medications and medical supplies</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Flashlight</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cell phone with charger</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Extra batteries</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Personal hygiene items</strong> (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First aid kit, whistle, multipurpose tool</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency blankets, sleeping bags, and warm winter coats</strong></td>
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If the power has been out for less than 4 hours, eat food in the order it will spoil:
1. Eat the food in the **refrigerator**.
2. Eat food from the **freezer**.
3. Start eating food from your **emergency supply**.
Carbon monoxide (CO)

Often called the “invisible killer,” CO is an odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely. In the home, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel are potential sources of CO. Vehicles or generators running in an attached garage can also produce dangerous levels of CO. CO poisoning can cause serious health issues and even result in death.

If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow. During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.

Heat your home safely

Do:

- Use only the type of fuel designed for your heater.
- Store a fire extinguisher near the area to be heated.
- Make sure generators at least 20 feet from your home.
- Use a single, heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord to plug into your generator.

Don’t:

- Turn on the stove for heat; it is not safe.
- Store gasoline indoors where the fumes could ignite.
- Leave lit candles or other flames unattended.
- Keep grills, camp stoves, or generators inside or near your home.
- Use generators or appliances if they are wet. They should be somewhere rain or snow will not reach them.

Smoke and CO alarms

- Install smoke and CO alarms on every level of your home and a smoke alarm in every sleeping area.
- Place smoke alarms on a ceiling or high on the wall.
- If you’ll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and CO detector near the area to be heated.
- Test batteries in smoke and CO alarms monthly and replace batteries twice a year.
- Vent all fuel-burning equipment outside.
- Have your furnace system and vent checked by a qualified technician each year to be sure they are working properly.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion.

Space heater safety

- Do not place a space heater within 3 feet of anything that may catch on fire (e.g. curtains, furniture, or bedding).
- Never cover your space heater.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- Make sure that the cord of an electric space heater is not a tripping hazard.
- Do not run the electrical cord under carpets or rugs.
- Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.
- If your space heater has a damaged electrical cord or produces sparks, do not use it.

If the CO or smoke alarm sounds, leave your home immediately and call 911. Do not re-enter your home until emergency personnel have told you it is safe.
SAFETY AROUND YOUR HOME

Slip and Fall Prevention

Anyone can fall on a slippery surface and the winter months have many hazards. These tips can help you maintain your balance and move with confidence across ice, snow or water covered surfaces.

- **Wear shoes with good traction** or apply traction aids to your shoes.
- **Dress warm.** If you are warm, so are your muscles. Cold muscles are tense muscles which can affect your balance, making you more likely to fall.
- **Be careful getting out of your car.** Make sure both feet are firmly planted on the ground before taking a step. Use the door frame to steady yourself and don’t walk between parked cars.
- **Stay on sidewalks or paths** that have been cleared.
- **Take short steps** with your toes pointed out slightly, **like a penguin!**
- **Pay attention to the surfaces around you.** Don’t move or turn your head to look down—this can throw off your balance. Instead, shift your eyes down.
- **Keep your driveway and walkways clear.** Remove snow as soon as possible to prevent ice patches from forming.
- **Plan your trips in advance.** If you don’t have to go out, don’t. Wait for the weather and sidewalks to clear.
- **Slow down.** Allow yourself plenty of time to get where you are going. Your chances of a slip increase if you are rushing.
- **Keep your hands free.** Wear gloves or mittens and avoid walking with your hands in your pockets or carrying heavy loads in your arms.

What if my pipes freeze?

Extreme cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes rupture.

**When very cold freezing temperatures are expected:**

- Leave all faucets running so there is a continuous drip of water.
- Improve the movement of heated air near pipes (e.g. open kitchen cabinet doors beneath the kitchen sink).
- Keep the indoor temperature warm.

**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 the pipes are ruptured, do not drink your water.** Instead use bottled water or get water from a neighbor’s home.

Shoveling snow

Your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so try not to overdo it. Use caution and take breaks. **Push the snow** instead of lifting it and **lift lighter loads** when possible.

Cold weather puts an **extra strain on the heart.**

If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor’s advice about shoveling snow or other outdoor activities in the cold.
Winter Driving

The harshness of North Country winters makes it important to prepare your vehicle for bad weather or extreme cold. Vehicle preparedness for winter includes: maintaining your vehicle and stocking your vehicle for an emergency. Make sure your vehicle is ready for the road to decrease your risk of an accident, breakdown or other problem. Having the right equipment on hand can help solve problems that do arise.

Driving Tips

◊ Every vehicle handles differently. Take time to learn how your vehicle handles under winter weather conditions.

◊ **Keep your gas tank full** in case of evacuation or power outages. A full tank will keep the fuel line from freezing.

◊ **If road conditions are hazardous, avoid driving** if possible. Wait until road and weather conditions improve before venturing out in your vehicle.

◊ **Before driving your vehicle clear snow, ice, and dirt** from the windows, forward sensors, headlights, tail lights, backup camera and other sensors around the vehicle.

◊ **Drive slowly.** It’s harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface. Give yourself more room between you and the car in front of you to allow plenty of time to stop.

◊ Know whether your vehicle has an anti-lock brake system and learn how to use it properly. Anti-lock brake systems prevent your wheels from locking up during braking. **If you have anti-lock brakes, apply firm pressure to the brake pedal and hold while the anti-lock brake system does the work. You will feel a pulsing in the pedal—this is normal.**

Vehicle Safety Checklist

☑ **Battery:** As the temperature drops, so does your battery power. This also means more battery power will be used to start your car. Have your battery checked for voltage, amperage and reserve capacity. Your charging system and belts should also be looked at.

☑ **Lights:** Make sure all the lights on your vehicle are in working order. Check headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers and interior lights.

☑ **Cooling system:** Be sure you have enough coolant in your vehicle and that the cooling system is in working order.

☑ **Windshield:** Make sure your windshield wipers work and your wiper fluid tank is full before the first snow fall. Also be sure to check that your front and rear window defrosters work properly.

☑ **Tires:** Tires deflate when the temperature drops. Make sure each tire is filled to the manufacturers’ recommended inflation pressure. You can find this listed in your owner’s manual or on a placard located on the driver’s side door. If you plan to use snow tires, have them installed in the fall so you are prepared before it snows.

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Check your tire tread!

Replace tires that have uneven wear or too little tread. Tread should be **2/32 of an inch** or greater.

**Tip:**

Insert a penny into your tire’s tread groove with Lincoln’s head upside down and facing you. If you can see all of Lincoln’s head, your tread depth is less than 2/32 inch and should be replaced.
IS YOUR VEHICLE WINTER READY?

Winter vehicle preparedness is not just a visit to the mechanic, it also means being ready with the right equipment if you get stuck in a winter storm. This can help you rescue yourself or make it easier for someone to rescue you. It could also make it easier to help someone else you may find along the road.

Keep a well stocked car

- Cell phone, portable charger and extra batteries
- Shovel and windshield scraper
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Flashlights with extra batteries
- Water and snack food
- Extra hats, coats, mittens and blankets
- Chains or rope
- Canned compressed air with sealant for tire repair
- Road salt and sand or cat litter to help tires get traction
- Emergency flares, hazards, or bright colored flags
- Booster cables
- Pocket knife, compass, and road maps
- First aid kit with necessary medications
- Waterproof matches and a tin can to melt snow for water

Buckle up for Safety!

When it comes to securing your child in a vehicle, child safety seats play a major role in preventing death and injury. Having your child in the correct child safety seat can save their life if an accident were to happen.

**All children under age 13 years** should always ride properly restrained in the back seat. Make sure car seats and booster seats are properly installed and that any children riding with you are in the right car seat, booster seat or seat belt for their age and size.

Though thick outerwear will keep your child warm, it can interfere with the proper harness fit on your child in a car seat. **Harnesses fit around puffy outerwear will not be snug enough to properly restrain your child** in the event of an accident. Instead, place blankets or coats around your child after the harness is snug and secure.

**Never leave a child unattended** in or around your vehicle. Always lock your vehicle and keep your keys out of reach when exiting so children do not play or get trapped inside.

For a full list of car seat recommendations for children birth to 12 years visit [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov).

If you are stopped on the road in wintry weather, follow these safety rules:

- **Stay with your vehicle** and don’t over exert yourself.
- **Put bright markers on your vehicle’s antenna** or windows and keep the interior dome light turned on.
- To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, **don’t run your vehicle for long periods of time** with the windows up or in an enclosed space. If you must run your vehicle, clear the exhaust pipe of any snow and run it only for short periods of time – just long enough to stay warm.

The Clinton County Sheriff's Office holds Child Safety Seat Checks throughout the County. These checks will assist you in making sure your car seat is installed correctly, is the correct seat for the child, and has not been recalled.

For more information on this program or to find an upcoming date, call (518) 565-4300 or visit [www.clintoncountygov.com/sheriff](http://www.clintoncountygov.com/sheriff).
Snowmobiling

Don’t forget about your other winter vehicle – your snowmobile. Snowmobiling requires preparation for the rider and the sled. Snowmobiles need to be checked over and serviced with fuel and fluids before each ride. Long trips require physical stamina and can be hard on the rider. Get plenty of sleep, eat nourishing meals, and stay well hydrated.

- **Group riding is always the safest way to snowmobile.**
- **Excessive speed and alcohol use are the two highest contributing factors in fatal snowmobile crashes in New York State (NYS).** Keep your speed on the trail in check and never ride under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- **NYS requires all snowmobile drivers and passengers wear a Snell or DOT approved safety helmet, except when operating on private property owned by either the driver or passenger.** Helmets provide warmth, impact protection and a platform for eye protection. Helmets should be snug but not uncomfortably tight and, most importantly, they should be buckled.
- **Personal equipment** takes up a little room on your sled but can make a huge difference in an emergency. **Always carry** a flashlight, a utility knife, a cell phone, snacks, ice picks, trail maps, and a compass.

**Navigating around snow plows**

- **Don’t crowd a snow plow** or travel beside it. Snow plows travel slowly, make wide turns, stop often, overlap lanes and exit the roadway frequently.
- **The road behind an active snow plow is safer to drive on.** If you find yourself behind a snow plow, stay put or use caution when passing.
- **When you are driving behind a slow plow, don’t follow too closely.** A snow plow operator’s field-of-vision is limited; if you can’t see the mirrors, the driver can’t see you. **Materials used to de-ice the road could also hit your vehicle.**
- **Snow plows can throw up a cloud of snow that can reduce your visibility** to zero in less time than you can react. Never drive into a snow cloud—it can hide vehicles or other hazards.

**Weather terms to know:**

**A WATCH** means that there is a high possibility that a weather emergency will occur. When a severe storm watch is issued for your area, continue to listen to the radio or television for updates and pay attention to visible weather changes around you.

**A WARNING** means that a weather emergency is already happening, or will happen soon. When you hear a warning, take immediate action.

“**Shelter-in-place**” means to take immediate shelter where you are—at home, work, school, or in between.
In cold temperatures, your body loses heat faster than it can be made. This can lead to serious health problems, including hypothermia and frostbite. When the weather is extremely cold, try to stay indoors. If you must go outside, protect yourself by dressing properly and being aware of the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite.

**Hypothermia**

Hypothermia is an abnormally low body temperature. It typically occurs at very cold temperatures, but can happen at higher temperatures if a person is wet (from rain, sweat or cold water) and becomes chilled. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia very dangerous, because a person may not know that it’s happening and won’t be able to do anything about it.

**Signs & symptoms of hypothermia:**
- shivering
- exhaustion
- confusion
- fumbling hands
- memory loss
- slurred speech
- drowsiness

**At risk groups in cold weather:**
- Older adults without proper food, clothing, or heating.
- People who stay outdoors for long periods of time (homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.).
- People who drink alcohol in excess or use illicit drugs.
- Babies sleeping in cold rooms.

**Frostbite**

Frostbite occurs when skin is exposed to extreme cold for too long. It causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. The nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes are most often affected. A victim is often unaware of frostbite because frozen tissue is numb.

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**Prevent frostbite** by covering body parts most often affected in warm dry clothing when going outside in winter. **When going outside be sure to wear:** a hat, a scarf or knit mask that covers your face and mouth, water-resistant coat and boots, mittens or gloves, and several layers of loose-fitting clothing.

If a person is experiencing hypothermia or frostbite, or if their temperature is below 95°F, **seek medical attention as soon as possible.** Get them into a warm room or shelter. Remove any wet clothing. Warm them under dry layers of blankets and clothing. **Place areas affected by frostbite in warm-to-touch water.**

**Use caution when treating frostbite.** Since skin may be numb, victims of frostbite can do more harm to damaged tissues.

**When treating frostbite, DO NOT:**
- Walk on feet or toes with frostbite.
- Rub or massage areas with frostbite.
- Use a heating pad, electric blanket, fireplace, heat lamp, radiator, or stove for warming.
OUTDOOR SPORTS

The North Country boasts some of the best scenery for winter outdoor sports in the country. From the Adirondacks to Lake Champlain there are hundreds of places to hike, hunt, ski and fish. Because of the extreme temperatures and secluded areas used for these sports, it is important to plan ahead. **Tell someone your plans**, including where you are going and when you plan to be back. Always be prepared in case of an emergency and travel in groups. Avoid alcoholic beverages. They can impair your judgement in an emergency and may make you more likely to get frostbite or hypothermia.

**Winter Hiking**

- **It takes more effort and energy** to move through the snow. Be sure to **choose trails** within your group’s abilities.
- **Know what time the sun sets** and plan your trip so you return before dark.
- **Be aware** that temperatures are lower, winds are stronger and snow is deeper at higher elevations.
- **Keep an eye on the conditions**; if they worsen, head back immediately.
- **Stay on the trails** to avoid unseen obstacles covered by snow. Use extreme caution when crossing ice.
- **Rest often**, eat regularly and stay hydrated.
- **Use snowshoes or skis** when snow is deeper than 8 inches.

**Ice Fishing**

- **Ice thickness should be your top priority.** Ice rarely freezes uniformly; it may be a foot deep in one location and just an inch thick a short distance away.
- Find a trusted local resource that is **well-informed of the current ice conditions**. This could be a local bait & tackle shop, a lodge, guide or state agency.
- **Always test the ice thickness when you arrive.** This can be done with an ice chisel, ice auger or cordless ¼ inch drill with a long bit.

**Firearm safety:**

1. Treat every firearm as if it is **loaded**.
2. Always keep the muzzle **pointed in a safe direction**.
3. **Keep your finger off the trigger** and outside the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot.
4. **Always be sure of what is in front of and behind your target.** Once you pull the trigger you cannot take back the bullet!

**Layer up!**

**Inner layer:** Wear fabrics that hold in your body heat without absorbing moisture. Wool, silk, or polypropylene will hold more body heat than cotton.

**Middle layer:** An insulating layer will help you retain heat by keeping air close to your body. Natural fibers, like wool or goose down, or a classic fleece work best.

**Outer layer:** The outermost layer helps protect you from wind, rain, and snow. It should be tightly woven, water and wind resistant.

**Ice thickness guide:**

- 2” or less — **STAY OFF**
- 4” — ice fishing or other activities on foot
- 5” — snowmobile or ATV
- 8-12” — car or small pickup
- 12-15” — medium truck

**Hunting**

Hunting can be a taxing sport for even fit hunters. Each season, many hunters suffer heart attacks and strokes. Walking, carrying gear, shooting and dragging carcasses can place extra stress on your heart. Your risk increases if you are not regularly physically active, are a smoker, have high blood pressure or cholesterol, or have other health problems. Consult your doctor to be sure you are healthy enough to participate this hunting season.
Information in this guide was adapted from:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov));
- New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH, [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov));
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services ([www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov));
- Highways Traffic & Safety Association (NHTSA, [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)); and,
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)).