



# Rehab News

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## Winter Threats to Your Heart

Winter and bitter cold temperatures pose danger for those with heart disease and especially for older adults. The combination of colder temperatures and physical activity increases the workload on the heart. In addition, your heart has to work extra hard to maintain your body heat. With all this extra work, your heart demands more oxygen, however cold causes arteries to tighten reducing oxygen to the heart. It's important for everyone to be aware of the threats cold weather can bring and take appropriate precautions to ensure your safety.

### SAFETY TIPS FOR COLD WEATHER:

- ✓ Avoid alcohol as it gives you a false sense of warmth and can cause your heart to work harder.
- ✓ Don't overdo it, start your morning off slow. The cardiovascular system can adapt to slow, progressive change. Take frequent breaks or avoid sudden exertion like shoveling snow.
- ✓ Prevent hypothermia by wearing a hat and layers of clothing to protect you from cold temperatures. Older adults have lower subcutaneous fat and are more prone to suffer from hypothermia.
- ✓ Remain hydrated and drink water regularly to prevent overexertion and dehydration.
- ✓ Breathe through your nose in cold weather; it has various defense mechanisms to prevent impurities and excessively cold air from entering your body.



**If you would like to learn more about a heart-healthy lifestyle, visit our therapy department.** Physical and Occupational therapists can help you to develop a healthier lifestyle and reduce many of the risk factors that cause cardiac conditions. Cardiac rehabilitation programs are designed to help you control your symptoms and resume an active and productive life within the limits of your condition.

References: American Heart Association