

HEALTH CARE ALERT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION PROVIDING HEALTH CARE TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR SUPPORT TEAMS

Oh, the weather outside is frightful.....

Risk Management Corner

Cold Weather Health Emergencies

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. Having information about the most common problems (hypothermia and frostbite) is essential to staying safe. Take a moment to read about who is at risk and apply this to yourself or someone you support. Many people will have multiple risk factors making it even more important to understand what can happen and making preventive practices part of your daily routine.

What is hypothermia?

Hypothermia is low body temperature. When the body is exposed to cold temperatures, it begins to lose heat faster than it can produce heat. If this exposure continues for a prolonged time, it will use up the body's stored energy. This results in an abnormally low body temperature. A low body temperature affects the brain and thought processes. When this happens the affected person may not be thinking clearly and may not even know it is happening. If they are not aware, they won't be able to take preventive action. If the conditions are right (the person is chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water), **hypothermia can even occur at temperatures above freezing.**

Who is at risk?

While we all are at risk if the conditions are present and we do not protect ourselves, other risks include older age, very young age, impaired judgment, communication difficulties, alcohol and drug use, certain medical conditions (hypothyroidism, malnutrition, stroke, severe arthritis, Parkinson's disease,

trauma, spinal cord injuries, burns, nerve damage), and medications (antipsychotics, sedatives).

Signs of hypothermia in adults:

Shivering
Exhausted/tired/drowsy
Confused
Memory loss
Slurred speech

What do you do if you suspect hypothermia?

*Take the person's temperature. If it is below 95 degrees, the situation is an emergency – CALL 911.

* If medical care is not immediately available or while waiting for medical services, start warming the person:

- Get the person into a warm room or shelter
- Remove wet clothing, if applicable
- Warm the center of the body first – chest, neck, head, and groin – use an electric blanket if available. You can also use skin to skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels or sheets.
- Offer warm beverages if the person is awake and alert – avoid alcoholic beverages and caffeinated beverages – broth is a good choice.

* After the body temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.

* Get medical attention as soon as possible.

If the hypothermia is severe, the person may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or to be breathing. **Get emergency medical assistance immediately (CALL 911). CPR should be provided.** In some cases, hypothermia victims who appear to be dead can be successfully resuscitated.

What is frostbite?

Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure that causes freezing in the deep layers of skin and tissue. Frostbite can cause permanent damage and severe cases can lead to amputation. It is recognizable by a loss of feeling and a waxy-white or pale appearance of the skin. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes.

Who is at risk?

Many of the risk factors are similar to those for hypothermia listed above – older age, younger age, impaired judgment, communication difficulties, alcohol and drug use. Other risks include smoking, medical conditions such as arthritis, atherosclerosis, diabetes, impaired circulation, or any condition affecting blood vessels. Anyone who is immobilized or has limited mobility as well as a previous cold injury is also at risk. Medications that contribute to a constriction of blood vessels (most CNS stimulants) place a person at risk. Additional groups of people at risk include: winter sports enthusiasts, homeless people, very thin people, malnourished people, outdoor laborers, African-Americans, people of Arabic descent or people who reside in warm climates.

What are the signs of frostbite?

- White or grayish-yellow skin area
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- Numbness

**The person may not be aware until someone else notices it because the frozen tissues are numb.

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*The information presented to you is to increase your awareness of health conditions. It is not intended to replace medical advice. Please seek the advice of a physician for any health related concerns.





*To find out about other companies that provide home health care services, please contact your insurance company directly or contact PCHC for support.
*PCHC does not support or advocate for any one company. We share all of our resources to keep you fully informed.

When Special Needs Require Special Care...

Willits Pharmacy Services located in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, is the place to call. Willits is a full service pharmacy providing for individuals who require specialized pharmaceutical care. Their experienced, dedicated staff has been servicing nursing homes, personal care facilities, long-term care facilities and group homes for over 25 years. They provide reliable, hands on experience in dealing with long-term pharmacy care and make sure all clients receive individual attention. They work rigorously building relationships of trust and maintaining communication with all their contracted agencies.

They offer a variety of packaging styles to suit your needs and carry an extensive inventory of incontinence products, nutritional supplements and medical/surgical supplies. They will work with your facility to provide an administration process that offers flexibility and simplicity. They provide patient education sheets on all medications, answers to your questions and solutions for any situation relying on the integrity of medication administration.

The **Willits Pharmacy Services Team** wants to relieve you of your worries about medication orders for your residents. Therefore, they have created a company that focuses on service – the kind of service that cross-checks medication orders for harmful interactions, the kind of service that allows you to talk to a real person, the kind of service that special care requires. Willits Pharmacy Services maintains the personal approach of a community pharmacy while providing additional services that are crucial to medical care agencies and facilities. The bottom line is **Willits Pharmacy Services really cares!!**

For additional information, please e-mail: www.willitsrx.com

Primary Home Care, a Service of RevolutionCare Bringing Access to Primary Care to Patients' Homes

Primary Home Care, a service of RevolutionCare, Inc. (PHC), is a nurse practitioner driven primary care practice dedicated to improving access to care for medically isolated or homebound individuals. By definition, our patients are some of the most vulnerable members of society because they are unable to access basic primary care, mostly due to their physical limitations, preventing them from ambulating to their physicians' offices.

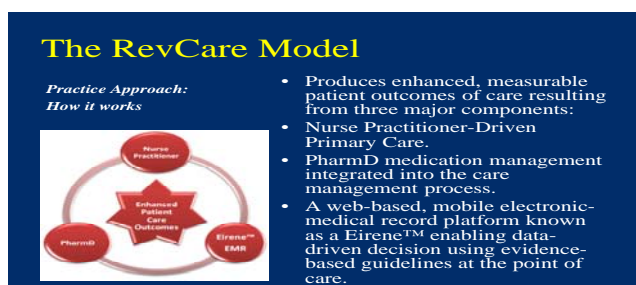
We serve patients with a variety of conditions, including intellectual/developmental disabilities. These patients live in communities where access to primary care services is difficult. This can result in care that is 'reactive,' which promotes an acute care model, as opposed to 'proactive.' Our nurse-practitioner driven chronic care model is proactive, and includes PharmDs (pharmacist) on the team to help in the medication selection and monitoring process to assure optimal care outcomes.

Our electronic medical record system supports our nurse practitioners and PharmDs with decision support technology, which provides access to information real-time in patients' homes.

PHC brings the primary care office right to patients' homes. While we provide the primary care visit and medication management support, we also identify needs for and help to coordinate other services including:

Scheduled Monthly Visits
Sick visits, specialty visits
Continence care
Cardiology
Homecare/Skilled Nursing
Hospice

Prescription Management
Wound management
Podiatry
Diagnostic Testing such as x-rays, ultrasounds, routine lab tests
Physical and occupational therapy
Other services





Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Facts

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - <http://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death.

Where is CO found?

CO is found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, burning charcoal and wood, and gas ranges and heating systems. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned by breathing it.

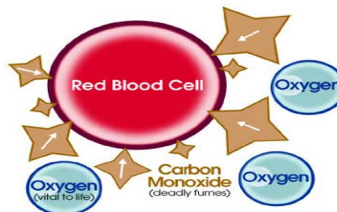
What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. High levels of CO inhalation can cause loss of consciousness and death. Unless suspected, CO poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other illnesses. People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from CO poisoning before ever experiencing symptoms.

How does CO poisoning work?

Red blood cells pick up CO quicker than they pick up oxygen. If there is a lot of CO in the air, the body may replace oxygen in blood with CO. This blocks oxygen from getting into the body, which can damage tissues and result in death.

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Who is at risk from CO poisoning?

All people and animals are at risk for CO poisoning. Certain groups — unborn babies, infants, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or respiratory problems — are more susceptible to its effects. Each year, more than 400 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room and more than 4,000 are hospitalized due to CO poisoning. Fatality is highest among Americans 65 and older.

Prevention Guidelines

You Can Prevent Carbon Monoxide Exposure

- Do have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Do install a battery-operated CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911.
- Do seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseous.
- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.

Needle Stick Injury Prevention Tips

A needle stick injury can be defined as a break in skin from a needle or a sharp. A sharp is any item having corners, edges, or projections capable of cutting or piercing the skin. Some examples of sharps (other than needles) include lancets (used to obtain a drop of blood for blood sugar testing), razors, and scalpels. It is estimated that more than 800,000 needle stick injuries occur in the United States annually. Exposure to a contaminated needle places a person at risk for exposure to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. The only means of decreasing exposure is through prevention. Listed below are some tips to prevent needle stick injuries within the home:

BE PREPARED:

- Place sharps disposal container close to where the sharps are being used.
- Explain what you are doing to the individual.
- If an individual is not cooperative, a plan must be developed to address safety.



DISPOSAL

- Never recap a needle!
- Dispose used sharps in the proper, puncture resistant, leak proof containers
- Avoid overfilling sharps container; check periodically
- Contact your local hospital, health unit or municipal waste authority to discuss where the container can be disposed of once filled.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- Use gloves when using a sharp.
- Workers are required to report all injuries occurring on the job to their supervisor. If you accidentally puncture or cut yourself with a used sharp, treat the wound using first aid measures and then seek medical attention.

Resources

Safe Needle Disposal
<http://www.safeneedledisposal.org>

Safe Handling and Disposal of Sharps and Medical Supplies in Home Healthcare Settings
http://www.osach.ca/products/facts_e/lap_145.pdf

Safety and Health Topics: Bloodborne Pathogens and Needlestick Prevention
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodbornepathogens/>

Safe Needle Disposal Companies

BD Diabetes
1-888-232-2737
<http://www.bd.com/us/diabetes/>

Stericycle
1-877-337-4277
<http://www.stericycle.com/community-sharps-collection.html>

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What should you do if you see signs of frostbite?

- Seek medical care.
- Check the person for signs of hypothermia as this may also be occurring.
- If there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and immediate medical care is not available, do the following:
 - Get the person into a warm room
 - Do not allow the person to walk on frostbitten feet or toes – this increases the damage
 - Immerse the affected area in warm – not hot – water or warm the affected area using body heat – for example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers
 - Do not rub the frostbitten area or massage it – this can cause more damage.
 - Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove or radiator for warming. Remember the affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.
 - Obtain medical attention as soon as possible

Prevention and Protection

What can be done to protect people from frostbite and hypothermia?

- Recognize the environmental conditions that lead to potential cold-induced illnesses and injuries (temperature, wind chill factor, etc.).
- Learn the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses/injuries and what to do to help those who are affected.
- Select proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions.

- Keep your head, neck and face covered by wearing a hat and a scarf or knit mask.
- Clothing should be layered as follows:
 - Inner layers – should be snug, made of wool, silk or polypropylene – these hold heat better
 - Middle layers – should be wool blend or fleece worn loosely so the moisture next to your skin can vent outwards
 - Outer layer – should be wind and weather resistant
- Sleeves should be snug at the wrist
- Mittens provide finger to finger contact which helps maintain better warmth. If you do wear gloves, use liners which will help keep the fingers warm.
- Protect feet with heavy socks and water-proof boots or shoes.

Follow general winter safety guidelines:

- Keep well hydrated
- Drink plenty of warm beverages, avoiding those with alcohol or caffeine
- Avoid smoking
- Keep physically fit
- Pace yourself during outside activity
- Follow a healthy diet
- Stay dry
- Eat high energy foods
- Go outside during the warmest part of the day
- Avoid exhaustion or fatigue because energy is needed to keep muscles warm
- Use the buddy system (go out in pairs)
- Keep Durable Medical Equipment (DME) items

(e.g., wheelchairs) clean and in good working condition

Listen to the news for the wind chill index.

Wind chill is an estimation of how cold it feels outside when the effects of temperature and wind speed are combined. Unprotected portions of the body, such as the face or hands, can chill rapidly and should be protected as much as possible from the cold wind. A 10 mile per hour wind combined with a 30°F temperature can have the same chilling effect on the body as a temperature of 21°F in a calm atmosphere. The Weather Service issues this information as the wind chill index.

BE SAFE!

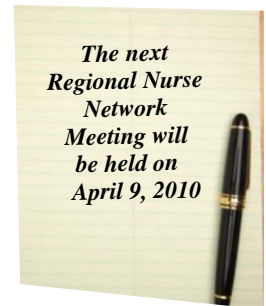
An additional resource is to sign up for AlertPA. This is a system that helps officials quickly send emergency notifications and alerts to users for severe weather and other life and health threatening incidents. Register for AlertPA by going to <https://alert.pa.gov/index.php?CCheck=1>.

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/winterstorms>

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/windchill/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hypothermia>

Reminder



Nursing Announcements

Marie Devlin, MSN, MSEd, RN, CDDN,

recently retired from her position at PCHC on December 18th. Marie worked at PCHC for over 6 years and during that time provided supports to Delaware, Philadelphia and Chester Counties as well as numerous provider agencies throughout our region. Marie will surely be missed.

Bette Ann Belleville, BS, RN, who has been with PCHC for over three years, will move from providing supports to Delaware County to Chester County. Her provider agency assignment will be as follows:

- Brian's House
- Brothers of Charity
- Camphill
- C&K Solutions
- Devereux
- Holcomb
- Impact Systems

- KenCrest Services
- Lynch Homes
- M-5
- Melmark
- R-House
- Rosehill School
- Royer Greaves

Joyce Simons, RN who has a background in developmental disabilities nursing and pediatric nursing will be joining PCHC and will be assigned to Delaware County. Her provider agencies will be as follows:

- Catholic Social Services
- CADES
- CK Center
- Community Interactions
- DEC
- Divine Providence
- Don Guanella
- Elwyn
- Kelsch
- LifePath (Delaware County)
- Values into Action

Please check our website at <http://www.pchc.org/Documents/Publications/PDFs/Nurse-Assignment-List-ForWeb.pdf> for your direct nursing contact at PCHC.



Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care

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PCHC is a core program of PMHCC, Inc.



PCHC would like to Introduce and Welcome:

Monique Shaw, MPH

as the new "Outreach Projects Manager" She has experience working in the field of Emergency & Disaster Preparedness and received her Masters Degree in Public Health with a concentration on Community Health and Prevention from Drexel University.

Monique can be reached at: (215) 546-0300 (ext. 3230)