




Winter Safety for Young Children



The West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association | www.nurturingwvbabies.org



Experiencing the season of winter can be fun, but it can bring some hidden challenges, especially for young children or children with special needs. Here are some tips for making winter a magical season of wonderment and fun.



Stay hydrated. While we typically worry about hydration during hot summer months, the risk for dehydration remains in winter. During winter months, our bodies lose water through breathing, and sweat evaporates quickly in cold air. Being inside in dry, warm air for longer periods of time can also increase the need for hydration. Encourage young children to drink water. Soups and warm drinks are also ways to support hydration.

Mittens vs. gloves. Mittens are a good choice for young children. It is often frustrating for young children to get ten fingers into separate finger “sleeves”. Mittens help keep hands warm and will work well for outdoor activities. Consider buying multiple pairs of mittens, as one mitten will usually go missing.

Hats vs. earmuffs. Some children will find it very frustrating to wear a winter hat. Hats can be itchy, uncomfortable, and confining. For children who find hats unpleasant, consider using earmuffs or fleece headbands. These can help keep ears warm, while not being so confining.

Coats and bulky winter clothing. It is really important to make sure children are dressed properly for cold weather in winter. Watch clothing hazards around very young children, including hoods that have strings and scarves. Bulky coats can also be a challenge for children using car seats. The CDC recommends not buckling children into car seats with bulky winter coats. This makes it difficult to tighten the harness properly. Instead, cover the child with a blanket or coat after buckled in.

Playing in the snow. Some children delight in playing in the snow, others do not. When playing outside, several light layers, a coat, mittens, and hat or earmuffs will help children stay warmer. Children will get colder quicker, and non-verbal children may not be able to communicate they are cold. Watch for non-verbal cues such as shivering, wet clothing, grumpiness, bluish lips, or skin that is bright pink and cold to the touch. For those children who do not enjoy playing outside in the snow, consider bringing outside activities inside. For example, make “snow”, bring real snow inside on a cookie tray, or make a snow globe.

Fake snow recipe: Combine 2 1/2 cups of baking soda with 1/2 cup of hair conditioner in a bowl. Add more baking soda if it is too wet. Store up to five days.

