

Winter Activity Safety



SUMMARY

There is magic to camping in winter. It is one of the most challenging outdoor adventures. However, potentially extreme weather conditions, cold temperatures, and unique hazards associated with outdoor winter activities require careful planning to ensure safety.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Eating the right type of food when camping or playing in the cold is important.

One of the best ways to remember what is appropriate to eat when you are spending extended periods of time outside in cold weather is to use good nutrition to build the fire within. Make sure your food consumption includes sugars, which act like a fire starter; carbohydrates and proteins, which act as kindling; and fats that produce the energy needed to keep the fire burning and your body running at peak performance. Stay away from caffeinated drinks such as soda, coffee, and tea; drink plenty of plain water to keep yourself properly hydrated.

Keeping warm is the most important part of cold-weather camping and outdoor activities. Use the “C-O-L-D” method to stay warm.

- **C=Clean:** Since insulation is only effective when heat is trapped by dead air spaces, keep your insulating layers clean and fluffy. Dirt, grime, and perspiration can mat down those air spaces and reduce the warmth of a garment.

- **O=Overheating:** Avoid overheating by adjusting the layers of your clothing to meet the outside temperature and the exertions of your activities. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, and refrain from drinking caffeinated drinks that act as diuretics.
- **L=Loose layers:** A steady flow of warm blood is essential to keeping all parts of your body heated. Wear several loosely fitting layers of clothing and footgear that will allow maximum insulation without impeding your circulation. Having clothing that is brightly colored (orange or red) is also a good idea, so hunters and sportsmen can see you in snowy conditions. Always have a hat and wear it.
- **D=Dry:** Sweaty, damp clothing and skin can cause your body to cool quickly, possibly leading to frostnip and hypothermia. Keep dry by avoiding clothes that absorb moisture. Always brush away snow on your clothes before you enter a heated area. Keep clothing around your neck loosened so that body heat and moisture can escape instead of soaking through your layers.

RESOURCES

- [*Guide to Safe Scouting—Winter Activities*](#)
- *Fieldbook* (available at scoutshop.org)