



Active Play in Cold Weather: Supporting Outdoor Play in ECE Settings

Facilitator Guide

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Disclaimer

Nemours Children's Health is currently funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under a 5-year Cooperative Agreement (6NU38OT000304-05-00). Through this effort, we support statewide early care and education (ECE) organizations to integrate best practices and standards for healthy eating, physical activity, breastfeeding support, and reducing screen time in ECE systems and settings. The views expressed in written materials or publications, or by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services. Any mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Active Play in Cold Weather: Supporting Outdoor Play in Early Care and Education (ECE) Settings

Active Play in Cold Weather is a companion training to the Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS). The session content is suitable for early care & education professionals regardless of their participation in PALS. This session can be presented as a 1-hr session or two 30-minute sessions.

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For more information on PALS visit:

<https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/trainers/pals>

Questions? Contact PALSECE@nemours.org

Training Overview and Professional Development System Information

The following information is provided to assist trainers in entering trainings in state Early Care & Education (ECE) Professional Development registry systems, creating session certificates for participants, and marketing training sessions. Contact the Nemours PALS team for assistance if you have questions or need additional information on this micro session at PALSECE@nemours.org.

Session Title: Active Play in Cold Weather: Supporting outdoor play in ECE Settings

Time: 60 minutes

Description: Participants will explore recommended practices, challenges, and solutions to support safe, active, outdoor play in cold weather with young children. Additional topics addressed include family engagement and national and state recommendations on cold weather outdoor play.

Core Content Area(s): Health, Safety & Nutrition

Objectives:

1. Explain common misunderstandings about cold weather
2. Recognize solutions to common barriers to outdoor play in cold weather play
3. Understand National Recommendations, State Regulations, and Program Policies on cold weather outdoor play
4. Identify two strategies that support ECE professionals and children in enjoying outdoor play in cold weather

Session Handouts: Dressing for Cold Weather, Family Handout

Training Methods: Large and small group discussion, lecturette, video clip, brainstorming, optional pre/post assessment

Training Agenda

Training Component / Content	Slide(s)	Estimated Time
Welcome, Disclaimer, Objectives, Goal	1-4	2 minutes
Introductions/Icebreaker Personal benefits from time outdoors	5	5-8 minutes <i>varies by group size</i>
Outdoor best practices and benefits	6-7	2 minutes
Common Challenges	8	3 minutes
Objective 1: Misunderstandings/Myths	9-12	4 minutes – 15 minutes <i>varies by facilitation method</i>
Objective 2: Challenge-Clothing/gear	15-17	6 minutes
Challenge-Family reluctance	18-20	4 minutes
Movement Break	21	3 minutes
Challenge-Provider reluctance	22-25	6 minutes
Video Clip-sample activities and provider role	26	4 minutes
Outdoor activities for cold weather	27-29	6 minutes
Objective 3: National, State and Program recommendations and policies	30-33	4 minutes
Objective 4: Identify two strategies that support outdoor cold weather play Summary Activity	34-35	8 minutes
Closing Slides- Q & A, Thank You	37-37	2+ minutes
Total		60+ minutes

State Specific Content

Slides with state specific information will strengthen the overall training content. Trainers may choose to add slides with state licensure standards on outdoor play time, weather conditions outlined in licensure, or specific state resources available to support outdoor play in cold weather such as Maine's Winter Kids curriculum. As you are developing slides on administrative regulations and child care licensure, note that your state may have different regulations on outdoor play for each type of care (center, large child care homes and small child care homes, and PreK settings).

Review your state's child care regulations for guidance on the number of times outdoor play is required or the amount of time spent outdoors. Check to see if your state regulations define temperature limits or conditions of inclement or extreme weather. Some states administrative regulations provide temperature guidelines, other states leave this up to provider interpretation. Look in the regulations for information on provider role during outdoor play. There may be standards on providing structured (adult-led) activities, engaging in play with children or providing equipment that supports gross motor development.

The understanding of how cold weather is defined varies regionally. For example, a provider in New York State might consider a sunny 27° Fahrenheit a great day for outdoor play, a provider in Georgia may find this too cold for the children in care.

An example of a licensure slide is provided in the slide deck.

Slide 32

Suggested speaker notes:

New York State Child Day Care Regulations

Part 418-1: Child Day Care Centers

Effective 10/7/2021

1.7 Program Requirements

(k) Daily supervised outdoor play is required for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather or unless otherwise ordered by a health care provider. Parents may request and programs may permit children to remain indoors during outdoor play time so long as such children will be supervised in accordance with section 418-1.8 of this Subpart.

New York State child care regulations state that outdoor play is required daily except during inclement or extreme weather. The licensure also lists exceptions including extreme weather, health care provider order, and parent request (if supervision is available indoors).

Images

Trainers are free to edit images to better represent the providers and families in the communities served. Microsoft stock images are available at no charge.

Additional sites to access free images include the following:

- [Public health image library](#) from the CDC (not all are creative commons -- check under each image before downloading!)
- [Pexels](#)- Free stock photos, attribution required
- [Snap-Ed Photo Gallery](#)
- [Nappy](#)- Beautiful photos of Black and Brown people, for free
- [Burst by Shopify](#)- Free stock photos.

Slide 1

Healthy Kids, Healthy Future
PALS
Physical Activity Learning Session


Add your agency logo here

**Active Play in Cold Weather:
Supporting Outdoor Play in ECE Settings**

Add Trainer information here

Trainer notes:

Welcome your participants to the session, introduce yourself and share housekeeping information such as restroom locations and requesting cell phones to be silenced. Trainers are welcome to add a slide with group norms as desired. Sample group norms might include, Be considerate of differing opinions, Speak respectfully to each

other, Share your knowledge and experience, Minimize side conversations, Take care of your needs, and Celebrate accomplishments

Slide 2

Disclaimer

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Suggested Speaker Notes:

Development of the Physical Activity Learning Session (PALS) materials including today's session was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views express in this session do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Slide 3

Session Objectives



1. Explain common misunderstandings
2. Recognize challenges and solutions to cold weather play
3. Understand National Recommendations, State Standards, and Program Policies on cold weather outdoor play
4. Identify two strategies that support ECE providers and children in enjoying outdoor play in cold weather

Suggested Speaker Notes:

While some ECE provider and children enjoy being outdoors in the cold weather, others may need a shift in mindset to learn to enjoy the experience. Our objectives today will explore strategies that support children and ECE providers in safely enjoying active play in cold weather.

Slide 4



Suggested Speaker Notes:

The goal or outcome of our session is that more children experience outdoor play best practice daily, year-round, in early care settings.

Slide 5



Trainer notes:

Share something positive you experience after being outdoors then ask participants to introduce themselves and share a benefit or positive things they notice after being outdoors. This might be a personal benefit or something they notice in the children they care for.

Slide 6

PALS recap – Outdoor play best practices

Infants

- Outdoor play 2-3 times daily

Toddlers & Preschoolers

- Outdoor play 2-3 times daily
- 60-90 minutes of outdoor play daily
- 2 or more structured (adult-led) activities

How many times each day do children go outside at your program?

Suggested speaker notes:

The recommended practices come from Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Measures for Young Children in Out of Home Settings include 2-3 periods of outdoor play daily, weather permitting, for all children. There is not an established time recommendation for infants to be outdoors. Time outdoors may be

shortened due to cold conditions, but children should still go outside 2-3 times each day except in conditions of extreme or dangerous weather.

Recommended practices also include that children experience a minimum of 2 adult led activities outdoors daily. Children may be more active in structured activities and movement is important for children (and ECE provider) staying warm when it is cold outside.

Trainer Notes:

After discussing the best practices advance slide to trigger animation. Ask participant how many times each day to the children typically go outside? Does outdoor time happen on cold weather days? What happens during outdoor play time? Are ECE provider leading activities, engaging with children, and modeling enjoyment of outdoor play?

Slide 7

Benefits of outdoor play and outdoor time

Caregivers & Children

- Boosts immunity
- Exposure to fresh air
- Vitamin D
- Strengthens mental wellbeing
- Improves vision
- Lowers stress
- Improves sleep

Children

- Increases amounts of
 - active play
 - creative play
 - problem-solving play
 - cooperative play
- Increases awareness and appreciation of the environment

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Adults and Children

The benefits of time spent outdoors continue to be understood. Research reveals many health benefits to outdoor time including strengthening the immune system. Short periods of exposure to sunlight allow promotes the production of Vitamin D in the body. Vitamin D helps regulate the

amount of calcium and phosphate in the body which are essential for bone, teeth, and muscle development.

Mental Health-fights depression and anxiety

Time spent outdoors decreases the risk of Myopia (also called short-sightedness or near-sightedness) in children and ECE provider. Outdoor time allows us to focus on distant objects like trees or play equipment such as a ball flying through the air—anything that's more than an arm's length away. This use of long-distance vision uses different eye muscles. Think about how much time children and adults spend on devices that limit the use of peripheral and distance vision.

Children

The time spent outdoors is a strongly linked with children's physical activity levels. Outdoor open spaces allow children greater opportunities to practice and develop gross motor skills.

Studies have shown that children who spend time outdoors as young children grow up to be more engaged in their surroundings and conservation.

Next, we will consider national guidance on outdoor play in cold weather.

Slide 8

Common challenges to cold weather play



1. Misunderstandings or myths about cold weather play can lead to family and ECE provider resistance
2. Additional clothing requirements for providers and children
3. Additional time required for children to dress for outdoor play
4. Family resistance to cold weather play
5. ECE provider resistance to being outdoors in cold weather

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Days with perfect weather conditions are rare. As adults we need to adapt to less than perfect weather and help children learn to enjoy being outdoors in those conditions.

The slide captures some of the common challenges regarding outdoor play in cold weather.

What other challenges do you face in this situation?

During our time together today, we will discuss the challenges and strategies to address these challenges. Let's start with misunderstanding of myths about cold weather play.

Slide 9

Objective 1:

Explain common misunderstandings about cold weather play

Trainer Notes:

The next four slides address common myths or misunderstandings about cold weather. Two facilitation methods are provided. Trainers can read the slide content and lead a brief discussion on each misunderstanding. A second method for facilitating these slides would be to print *them* (see the *facilitator*

guidance document for printing) and do a table activity to share this content. Divide your participants into four or more groups giving each group one slide. Give them 5 minutes to discuss the slide. Instruct groups to be prepared to share their discussion highlights with the full group.

If you have a large participant group, and will have more groups, print two or more copies of the slides, and have multiple groups discussing the same misunderstanding.

Suggested Speaking Notes:

Let's address some common misunderstanding about cold weather play. Talking about misunderstandings or myths about the weather can increase awareness and encourage a healthy attitude about being outdoors in the cold weather.

Slide 10

Fact or Fiction

Cold weather or being cold causes the common cold

Fact

Colds are caused by viruses, not from cold temperatures

Viruses are more common in winter months as we spend more time indoors where viruses spread easily through the air



Trainer notes:

Depending on your facilitation method, read the slide or ask group(s) to share on their discussion.

Slide 11

Fact or Fiction

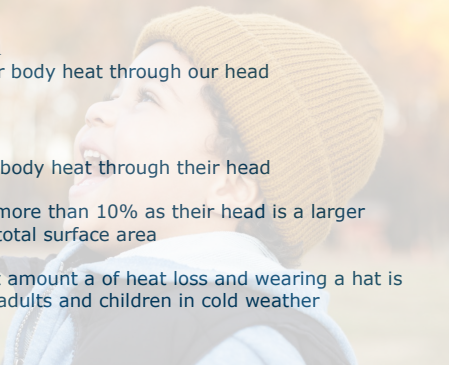
We lose most of our body heat through our head

Fact

Adults lose 10% of body heat through their head

Children lose a bit more than 10% as their head is a larger proportion of their total surface area

10% is a significant amount of heat loss and wearing a hat is important for both adults and children in cold weather



Trainer notes:

Depending on your facilitation method, read the slide or ask group(s) to share on their discussion.

While a loss of 10% of body may not seem like a lot, it is in fact a significant amount. Always wear a winter hat in cold weather to reduce heat from radiating off the body.

Slide 12

Fact or Fiction

We do not need to drink as much water in the winter months

Fact

Cold dry air and heated rooms make hydration just as important in the winter as the summer

Children and ECE providers should have access to water on demand year-round

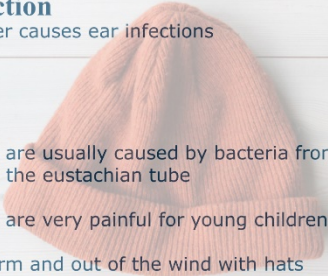


Trainer notes:

Depending on your facilitation method, read the slide or ask group(s) to share on their discussion.

Very young children cannot ask for water, so it is important for providers to offer water regularly to children over 6 months of age.

Slide 13



Fact or Fiction
Windy weather causes ear infections

Fact
Ear infections are usually caused by bacteria from the throat that travel up the eustachian tube

Ear infections are very painful for young children

Keep ears warm and out of the wind with hats

Trainer notes:

Depending on your facilitation method, read the slide or ask group(s) to share on their discussion.

Slide 14



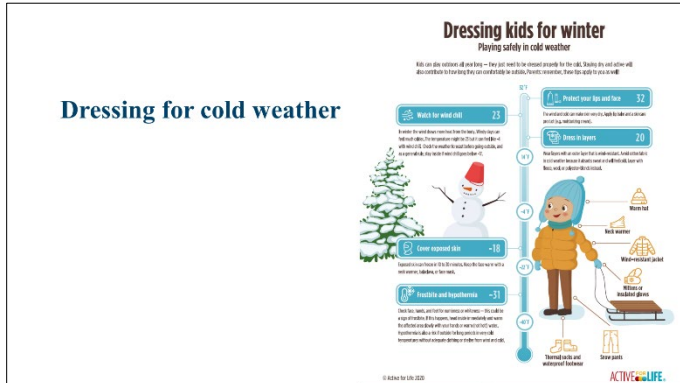
Objective 2:
Recognize challenges and solutions to cold weather play

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Being aware of challenges can help us plan solutions. As we go through each challenge, we will present some solutions, but I encourage you to share strategies you incorporate and your ideas to overcome the challenges.

Our first challenge is on cold weather clothing.

Slide 15



Trainer Notes: Ask participants to refer to the handout shown on the slide, ***Dressing kids for winter: Playing safely in cold weather.*** This resource was developed by Active for Life® and is used with permission. Active for Life® adjusted the document from Celsius to Fahrenheit and this version is not available on their website.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

You may have heard the saying, “there is not bad weather, only poor clothing choices.” Having the right clothing and gear can make the difference between unpleasant and wonderful outdoor experiences for both ECE provider and children. Let's consider what dressing for cold weather looks like in practice.

The first lesson for dressing for cold weather is layering. Light layers provide insulation and are more effective at keeping us warm than one thick layer. The first layer or base layer is long underwear or long johns. The middle layer provides warmth. This might be a sweater, sweatshirt, or fleece. The outer layer also adds warmth but also protects from elements including water and wind.

Try to keep most of your skin covered. Think function over fashion. For example, a hat is much more effective in retaining body heat than earmuffs.

Notice the jacket is all the way zipped, the wrist is covered by the jacket. Children may outgrow a winter coat before winter is over. If the coat sleeves leave the wrist exposed, cut tube socks make effective inexpensive wrist warmers. Ideally outer layers are water and wind resistant to allow children to play in snow. Bib snow pants or 1 one-piece suits are ideal for snow play.

We will discuss two challenges related to cold weather clothing. First, we will discuss access and availability of clothing, then we will address the additional time required for young children to dress and undress.

Slide 16

Challenge – Lack of Cold Weather Clothing

Children arrive at our program not wearing winter coats, boots, gloves, or hats

What can we do?



1. Host a coat and boot drive
2. Shop a resale shops for gently used clothing
3. Look for local agency grants
4. Ask for donations

Suggested Speaker Notes:

There are several reasons that children may arrive at a program without adequate cold weather clothing.

One consideration is that some families may bring their child into a program quickly from a warm car without cold weather clothing. Keep in mind that it is not safe for children to wear bulky winter coats

in a car seat. In a crash, bulky materials compress leaving space under the straps for a child to be ejected from the seat. Children can quickly get overheated in a warm car if they are wearing coats, hats and mittens.

Another challenge is the expense of clothing. Coats and cold weather gear can be costly posing a challenge for many families and rapidly growing children can go through multiple coats or boots over a winter season.

What solutions do you see to this challenge?

Trainer Note:

Facilitate a brainstorming of solutions to the questions and then advance the slide for the animation to reveal sample solutions.

Suggested Speaker Notes continued:

These are some ideas to gather cold weather gear to keep at your program. Having spare cold weather gear available allows all children to experience outdoor play. Gear can be stored in each child's cubby or storage space.

- For cold weather clothing drive ask that families to send in outgrown coats, snow boots, hats, and gloves.

Success story:

A family reached out to a child care program in Louisville, Kentucky to ask how they could support the program and honor their child who had attended the program. The director and family worked together on ideas. The family purchased 100 sets of child sized rainboots and 15 pairs of adult sized rainboots for staff as well as a storage rack for the program to hold boots. This purchase allows children to play outside on cold, rainy days and when the playground is muddy.

Transition statement: Cold weather clothing is one challenge we may encounter with families. Let's consider a few strategies we can apply to encourage families understand our programs outdoor play practices.

Slide 17

Challenge – Time needed to gear up

Young children are developing self care skills- this means dressing for cold weather play can be time consuming

What can we do?

1. Build time in the schedule for getting dressed
2. Post visual cues with the order of dressing
3. Pair up older children with a younger child
4. Save some layers for outside
5. Stagger departure as staffing allows

Trainer Notes:

As on the previous challenge slide, present the challenge to participants and allow a few minutes for brainstorming solutions. Then advance the slide and discuss the solutions presented.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Discuss the order of putting things on. Post pictures with the order for

dressing as a visual cue. Help children learn to follow along with the order.

Pair older children with a younger child to assist in putting on gear. Pair up similar aged children to help each other. Sometimes it is easier to zip a friend's coat than your own.

Save the final layer, hats, for putting on outside. Children can get overheated in the process of dressing and waiting for everyone. Teach them to put the last layer on as they walk out the door.

If staffing allows, stagger classroom departure with children who are dressed first going outside with one provider, so they don't get overheated.

[Additional Resource on visual cues in ECE settings:](https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/resources/Home%20Companion%20Guide%20for%20Visual%20Cues.pdf)

<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/resources/Home%20Companion%20Guide%20for%20Visual%20Cues.pdf>

Slide 18

Challenge- Family Resistance

1. Present outdoor play as a year-round activity
 - Include outdoor spaces on all tours and enrollment visits
 - Discuss the daily schedule and outdoor time periods
 - Provide information on the seasonal clothing family's supply
 - Share information on safety measures
2. Arrange spaces and provide activities for families to engage in outdoor play with their child
3. Provide opportunities for families to observe children enjoying outdoor spaces and activities
4. Proactively communicate clothing needs before the seasons change



Suggested Speaker Notes:

It is not uncommon for families to be resistant to their young children going outside in cold weather. While some reluctance may stem from the misunderstandings or myths about cold weather play, we discussed earlier, families may have concerns about their children getting wet, clothing getting dirty, safety, or other considerations. Take the time

to connect with families to understand where their reluctance is coming from so you can assist. Communicating with the appreciation that each of you is thinking of the needs of their individual child and how you can support that child's growth creates a space of shared respect and allows for an open dialogue.

Families of children with asthma may be especially concerned about their child playing outside. In addition to poor air quality, weather changes and cold, dry air are common triggers for asthma symptoms. Talk with families about their child's known triggers. Some children with asthma have success covering their mouth and nose with a loose scarf or face mask in very cold weather.

There are strategies that programs or child care homes can put in place to support families from the start and reduce resistance.

1. Present year-round outdoor play as the standard at your program. When prospective families visit your site, share the outdoor spaces and equipment, and discuss how outdoor play is on the schedule daily. Talk about seasonal clothing that families are expected to supply. If your program has coats and gear for children to use, discuss how this happens at your site. Share information on safety procedures. Talk with families about what weather and temperatures are the limits for outdoor play at your program. Share information on your program's outdoor play policy including who makes decisions on when outdoor play is cancelled due to weather.
2. Encourage families to spend time at pick up or drop off playing outdoors. Set up an obstacle course or nature walk around the playground perimeter as a short activity they can share with their child.
3. Share pictures and stories of outdoor play experiences on closed SM groups, newsletters, or parent information boards. A picture is worth a thousand words!
4. Help families be prepared for the season changes. Several weeks ahead start sending and posting reminders about gear needed. This is important year-round not just in the winter. Remind families to label items to reduce loss.

Additional Resources on asthma and cold weather play:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/weather-asthma.htm>

<https://allergyasthmanetwork.org/news/cold-air-asthma-in-winter/>

Slide 19



Trainer notes:

Facilitate a large group discussion how participants communicate with families to support seasonal transitions and concerns over cold weather play currently and how they might enhance their practices to better support families.

Slide 20

Family material- Active Play in Cold Weather

PALS
Active Play in Cold Weather

Benefits of Outdoor Play for Children

- Boosts immunity
- Exposure to fresh air
- Vitamin D
- Strengthens mental wellbeing
- Improves vision
- Increases amounts of active play

Dressing for the Weather

You may have heard the saying, "there is not bad weather, only poor clothing choices." Clothing choices can make the difference between unpleasant and wonderful outdoor experiences for both adults and children.

- Make sure children stay dry and keep moving to stay warm.
- Thin layers are most effective for keeping us warm.
- Below 32°F, a hat that covers the ears, gloves or mittens, and a wind and water resistant coat keep us comfortable.
- Boots and snow pants allow for longer periods of outdoor play.

Cold weather does not mean the end of active play outdoors!

- Help kids learn to enjoy being active outdoors on the gray, cold days of winter.
- Continue with your child's favorite outdoor activities.
- Visit local playgrounds.
- Take a walk and explore the winter world.
- sled play or build a snow castle.
- Bubble play - bubbles freeze at about 32°F.

Did you know? Colds are caused by viruses, not from cold temperatures

Viruses are more common in winter because cold temperatures keep people indoors in close quarters, allowing viruses to spread through the air more easily. Getting outdoors gives us fresh air!

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Trainer Notes:

Ask participants to refer to the handout shown on the slide, Cold Weather Play for Young Children.

Walk through the handout reviewing concepts discussed in the session. Facilitate a group discussion on how they might use this handout with families.

This is the suggested end point for session 1 if the content is being delivered over two-30-minute sessions.

Slide 21

Do You Want to Build a Snowman?



Trainer Notes:

This is a brain break stretching activity. As you read the script, pause to allow time for participants to stretch in the positions for approximately 10-20 seconds.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

I invite you to join me in a brain break activity where we move our bodies. You can stand with me or remain seated, moving as you are

comfortable.

We will move our bodies in some of the ways children and ECE providers might move during an outdoor activity.

- Let's start with gazing at the snow around us. Relax your shoulders and turn your head gently to the right as far you can. Hold there as you look out at the snow and feel the stretch in your neck. Now let's look at the snow behind us over our left shoulder. Bring your head back to the center and look straight up to see the snow swirling down.
- Next let's loosen our shoulder by reaching up to catch falling snowflakes. Reach up high and gently lean to the right and left stretching out our side bodies. Repeat this several times.
- Let's go to the trees to find arms for our snowperson. Walk across the snow and imagine it crunching under your feet. Can you walk with your toes in? Try walking with your toes out. Lift your knees and march in the snow. We've made it to the tree line, let's look for small branches or twigs we can use for arms. Oh look, a perfect one is on the ground can you bend to reach it? While you are reaching down, notice the stretch in your lower back. There are few acorn caps we can make a face from. Pick up some! Do you have everything you need to accessorize your snowperson?
- Let's pretend to skate back to our building spot. Push out with each leg and notice the stretch in your glutes and quads.
- It's time to build! Let's squat down and pack snow into a large ball for the snowpersons base. Nice job! Next let's turn to the left for fresh snow and repeat the squat. Gather up snow to pack it into a smaller ball for the middle section. Hold it in your arms as you carefully stand. Feel your quads working to stand! Place the second ball on the first and pack it in. One more squat to make our snowman's head! Once you have the perfect head, carefully stand, and reach up to put it on top. Steady!
- Take a few moments to add branch arms and acorn cap face. Personalize your snowpersons with your final touches!
- Take a giant step backwards and admire your work. Nice job!
- To wrap up our activity, bend down one last time and pick up enough snow for the perfect snowball. Stand and pack your ball. When it is ready toss it at the screen!

Great job stretching!

Slide 22

Challenge- Provider Resistance

Managing personal preferences about being outdoors in cold weather



Suggested Speaker Notes:

The final challenge we will address today is overcoming personal resistance to being outdoors in cold weather. While you may not have this resistance, you may work with peers or administrators who don't enjoy going outside in the cold or in any weather. Maybe understanding the benefits of outdoor play, learning from the fact or fiction

discussion or other content has influenced your thoughts. Perhaps you realized in our cold weather clothing discussion the impact of a warm coat and winter boots to better tolerate your work time outdoors. Let's discuss the provider role in cold weather play and consider how we can shift our mindset or that of co-workers.

Slide 23



Provider role

- Role model
 - Clothing choices that support outdoor play
 - Enjoyment of outdoor time
 - Move with the children
 - Demonstrate interest in nature and changes in the winter environment
- Plan activities that encourage children to move
- Communicate with families the benefits of outdoor play
- Support children in self-care activities
- Monitor and supervise all children
 - Check clothing and skin for wetness
 - Monitor children with asthma

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Role Model

Children watch ECE providers nonstop and learn how and what to do as they observe. Role modeling for outdoor play includes your clothing choices, how much fun you are having (or pretending to have), and how you move and engage with nature.

Plan

While cold weather gear is essential, children and ECE provider must be moving to stay comfortable outdoors. Active play gets our hearts pumping blood and help the body stay warm. Have several structured (adult-led) activities available. We will talk more about specific activities in a few minutes. Providers should also plan the length of time children will be outside. The length of time can vary based on the temperature, conditions, and precipitation.

Communicate Talk with families about benefits of play. Share stories of what children did during outdoor play and what they enjoyed.

Support: Practice patience as children are learning the important self-care and independence skills of dressing for cold weather play. We discussed some classroom strategies for this previously (visual cues, scheduling time, pairing children, staggering exit, hat on outside) but having patience with the process supports children as they become proficient at these important life skills.

Monitor and supervise

Watch the temperature and wind chill. If temperatures are extremely cold-limit time outdoors to 20-30 minutes.

Notice which children are not engaging in active play and may chill sooner.

Monitor gloves and clothing for wetness. Hands will get cold much faster in wet gloves. If possible, have a backup pair.

Cold weather can be a trigger for some children with asthma. Communicate with families to understand their child's asthma triggers and control measures.

Slide 24

Cold weather safety for Infants & Toddlers

- Outer layers should be wind and water resistant
- Check each child every 10-15 minutes
 - Feel a child's face and hands
 - Monitor for red skin, blue lips and shivering
- Monitor for the signs a child is overheating such as a red face or a sweaty neck
- Check gloves, mittens and clothing for wetness
- Watch for clothing hazards
 - Avoid jackets or hats with strings
 - Avoid scarfs or tuck in completely



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Rather than eliminating outdoor play, schedule shorter periods allowing children to experience the benefits of outdoor play.

Monitor the weather at the time play is scheduled.

Check each child- Monitor children for early signs of frost nip or frost

bite. These include red skin, blue lips and shivering. Move children indoors when these signs appear.

Be aware and monitor for the signs of overheating.

Check gloves and clothing- Wet clothing can draw heat away from the body, so it's important to keep kids and babies dry in any cool temps. Sometimes, children may only need dry gloves. Put an extra pair of gloves or mittens in their pockets if they plan to be outdoors for a while.

Help children learn that when being cold becomes unpleasant, it's time to go inside.

Additional Resources on Winter safety with young Children:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/winter-safety.html>

[https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/aap-offers-10-tips-to-keep-children-warm-and-safe-outdoors-in-](https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/aap-offers-10-tips-to-keep-children-warm-and-safe-outdoors-in-winter/#:~:text=As%20a%20general%20rule%20of,inside%20periodically%20to%20warm%20up.)

[winter/#:~:text=As%20a%20general%20rule%20of,inside%20periodically%20to%20warm%20up.](https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/aap-offers-10-tips-to-keep-children-warm-and-safe-outdoors-in-winter/#:~:text=As%20a%20general%20rule%20of,inside%20periodically%20to%20warm%20up.)

Slide 25



Additional safety considerations for infants

- When below 32°F limit outdoor time to 15- 30 minutes
- Consider infant carriers that keep baby up against the ECE provider's body
- Be flexible with staffing to allow 1 provider to take out 1-2 infants at a time
- Cover infants in strollers or sleds with a blanket

Trainer Notes:

Read the bullets on the slide.

Slide 26

What activities are children engaged in?



Trainer Notes:

Share this 2-minute video with your participants. As a prompt before the video ask participants to notice what the ECE provider are role modeling and the activities the children are doing.

Note the video starts 6 seconds after the music and has no captions or voices, only music. The video embedded in the presentation has

captions in English. Captions in additional languages can be accessed at <https://activeplay.ca/videos/>. Language options include English, Arabic, Farsi, Inuktitut, Ojibwe, Plains Cree, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog and Urdu.

Suggested Speaker notes after video:

What did you notice in the video?

On the video clip we saw children engaging in several activities in the snow and cold weather with engaged adults. Next, we will look at some outdoor activities to consider adding to our outdoor routines.

Video synopsis:

The video shows children dressing for play independently and with adult help. Children are shown playing on a snow-covered play outdoor play space, using a playground slide, rolling down a small bank of snow, making snow angels, swinging, playing hopscotch on a grid made with colored water, and playing tug of war.

Slide 27

Infant experiences in cold weather

- Sled pulls
- Stroller walks
- Nature walk
- Tummy time
 - Cover snow with a tarp or play mat
 - Place a blanket on top for tummy time
- Mobile infants
 - Set up space for pulling to stand
 - Provide push or pull toys



Suggested Speaker Notes:

As with indoor play, infant experiences involve engaged ECE provider. Caregivers that are on the ground during tummy time and engage in play, assist in rolling or holding them in a standing position. Holding the infant in the lap or carrying the infant helping them learn to enjoy time outdoors.

Caregivers can position equipment

to allow infants to pull to stand on play equipment or snowbanks.

What cold weather activities do you do with infants?

Slide 28



Toddler play in cold weather

- Sled play
- Snow painting with colored water
- Shoveling
- Throwing snowballs at targets
- Digging for treasures in snow
- Snow maze obstacle course
- Bubble blowing

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Adult led activities games are more likely to keep children moving. Start your time outside with a quick activity to warm kids up.

The slide lists several activities children can do with snow on the ground but there will be cold days without snow. On non snowy days keep toddlers engaged in the usual movement activities you do

outdoors. Many of your normal movement activities are possible with snow or with a few modifications.

Push pull toys for toddlers are even more challenging in a bit of snow.

Note that frozen bubbles are fun. Several websites have tips to make your own solution that tends to freeze better. See the resource document for websites.

Slide 29

Activities for Preschoolers

- Follow the Leader
- Obstacle courses
- Creative Play- Build animals, forts, snow people
- Carry games- move snow between areas
- Dance outdoors
- Sledding-pushing, pulling
- Target practice at hula hoops or buckets with sock snowballs
- Shovel snow
- Red Light, Green light
- Animal races
- Groups walks
- Snowflake Tag



Suggested speaker notes:

Start outdoor time with a structured activity to help children warm up. Identify 1-2 structured activities to lead during the outdoor period that are designed to keep children's bodies moving and active. Provide equipment that supports continued movement and play.

The list on the slide has some ideas for snowy weather and cold days

without snow. You will notice many games that can be played year-round or with small adaptations for the winter.

Obstacle courses can include hopping over and balancing on snow piles, crawling over snow mounds.

Dance while nature watches! Search children's winter music on your music source. If you have Spotify, Maine WinterKids Playlist is great list.

Optional information

Directions for Snowflake tag

Running is a great way to stay warm when it's cold outside. To play snowflake tag, choose a couple of children to be old man winter, old woman winter, or Jack Frost and 2-3 children to be the "sunshine." When the children are tagged by Jack Frost, they become snowflakes and must stand frozen with arms and legs extended. If the frozen children are tagged by a sunshine, they melt and return to the game.

Source: <https://activeforlife.com/outdoor-winter-activities-for-kids-no-snow/>

Slide 30

Objective 3

Understand National Recommendations,
State Standards, and Program Policies
on cold weather outdoor play

Suggested speaker notes:

While having a health mindset and appropriate clothing supports outdoor play, we should also understand how regulations and policies support or challenge outdoor play practices.

Slide 31

National Guidance on Cold Weather Play

Weather that poses a significant health risk includes **wind chill factor below -15°F** (-26°C) and heat index at or above 90°F (32°C)*

Wind chill is what the air temperature feel like to the skin

Wind chill reflects the combination of the air temperature and the wind



*Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 4th edition

Suggested Speaker Notes

Caring for our Children, the national guidelines for children in out of home care states that children should play outdoor when conditions do not pose significant health and safety concerns. During our session today we discussed with proper clothing, planning and supervision, how outdoor play can be safely enjoyed in most weather

conditions. You will notice that the slide states that wind chill below -15 degrees Fahrenheit poses a health risk meaning children outdoor play should not occur. Some states set standards in licensure as well that we will discuss next. Consider that the understanding of what is extreme weather varies regionally. While a provider in Maine, Minnesota or New York State might consider an overcast 20 degrees Fahrenheit a great day for outdoor play, a provider in Georgia may find this too cold for the children in care.

Temperature and wind-chill should be checked at the time of scheduled play as they change over the day. This information can be found on many weather apps or from the National Weather Service

https://www.weather.gov/unr/hourly_wx_forecast

Wind chill Source: <https://www.weather.gov/ama/WindChill>

Wind Chill is a term used to describe what the air temperature *feels* like to the skin due to the combination of cold temperatures and winds blowing on exposed skin. The colder the air temperature and the higher the wind speeds the colder it will feel on your skin if you're outside. So even if it remains the same temperature, but the wind speed increases it will feel colder to your skin because as wind blows across our bodies it takes the heat we naturally emit and blows it away from our bodies.

Trainer notes:

The Iowa department of Health developed the Child Care Weather Watch a tool used by many states to provide guidance on determining outdoor play decisions. <https://hhs.iowa.gov/media/2901/download?inline=>

Slide 32

State Guidance on Cold Weather Play Child Care regulations *example*

New York State Child Day Care Regulations
Part 418-1: Child Day Care Centers
Effective 10/7/2021

1.7 Program Requirements

(k) Daily supervised outdoor play is required for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather or unless otherwise ordered by a health care provider. Parents may request and programs may permit children to remain indoors during outdoor play time so long as such children will be supervised in accordance with section 418-1.8 of this Subpart.

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/regulations/418-1-DCC.pdf>

Trainer Notes:

Trainers are encouraged to pull information from their state child care administrative regulations/licensure related to outdoor play and post it on the slide. Look in regulations for guidance on number of times outdoor play or amount of time outdoors is mandated.

Check if your states regulations

define temperature limits or the term weather permitting. While there are states that provide temperature guides, many states leave this up to provider interpretation.

Different types of care (Small/Large Child Care Home, Child Care Centers, Preschools) may have different regulations and thus may have different standards for outdoor play.

Other aspects of cold weather play to look for in regulations are the standards on provider role during outdoor play. There may be standards on providing structured (adult-led) activities, engaging in play with children or providing equipment that supports gross motor development.

Suggested speaker notes example:

Let's take a moment to consider how today's content aligns with our state's child care licensing/administrative regulations.

New York State child care regulations state that outdoor play is required daily. The licensure also lists exceptions including extreme weather, health care provider order, and parent request (if supervision is available indoors). Notice that the regulations do not define inclement or extreme weather.

Trainer notes:

If the session time allows, facilitate a large group discussion asking participants to reflect and share how the listed licensure standard supports in supporting children to experience outdoor play in cold weather.

Slide 33

Program policies and decision makers



- Who decides if outdoor play will occur at your program?
- Is the decision determined by defined weather conditions or personal preference?
- How are families notified about weather conditions and outdoor plans.
- What does your program policy and parent or staff handbooks specify about outdoor play standards and decisions?

Sample Handbook or Policy Statement:

At ABC Child Care, all children will go outside 2-3 times each day when the temperature is above 28 degrees and wind chill and precipitation do not pose a danger.

Suggested speaker notes:

A written policy that outlines the criteria for outdoor play can ensure that children are allowed to experience it daily.

While children need protection during extreme weather, they should also learn how to safely enjoy time outdoors in the winter. Strong family handbooks contain information about the program

policy as well as how parents can support the policy including providing clothing to allow outdoor play. Staff handbooks that contain information about staff clothing and define roles and responsibilities during outdoor play support recommended practices.

Slide 34

Objective 4

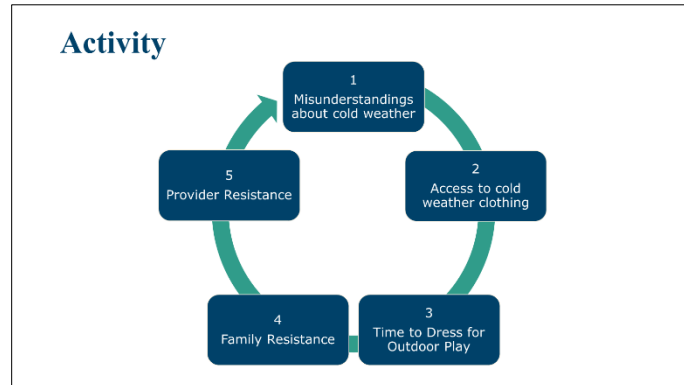
Identify two strategies that support ECE professionals and children in enjoying outdoor play in cold weather

Suggested speaker notes:

In our session today we have discussed how enjoyment of outdoor play can be improved with the **appropriate clothing** (coats, hats, mittens, boots) and **engaged ECE provider** providing **equipment and activities that keep kids moving** and role modeling for children. Having patience while children learn to enjoy outside play is essential.

Let's now think about solutions to the challenges we discussed that can keep both ECE provider and children from enjoying outdoor play.

Slide 35



Trainer Notes:

This summary activity can be facilitated as a pair and share or large group activity.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

For a large group activity

For our summary activity we will recap solutions and strategies we discussed to the challenges listed on the screen.

What solutions or strategy will you use to address misunderstands or myths about cold weather play?

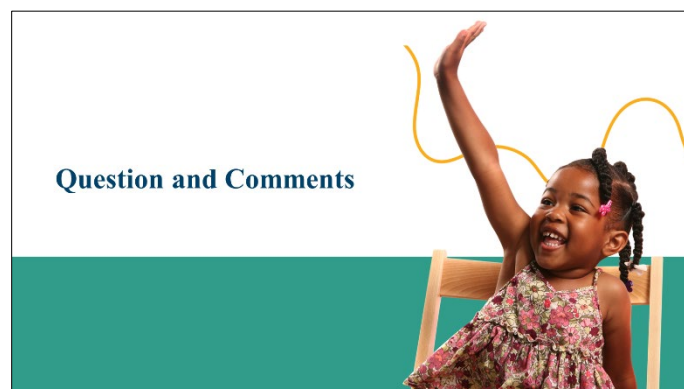
Continue around challenges in the circle, allowing time for reflection and discussion

For a pair and share activity, divide Participants into groups of 2-4, assign each group a challenge number 1-5, and challenge the groups to identify 2 or more solutions or strategies they will use to address the challenge. Give 4-5 minutes for discussion. Debrief the activity by asking each group to share aloud their solutions and discussions.

Possible responses include:

- 1) Share fact or fiction information with staff and families. Provide family handout on the benefits of play.*
- 2) Host a coat and boot drive, shop a resale shop for gently used clothing, look for local agency grants, ask for donations from local Civic groups*

Slide 36



Trainer Notes:

Invite your participants to raise any remaining questions or share other comments on cold weather play.

Slide 37

Thank you for joining today's training!



Insert Trainer Contact information

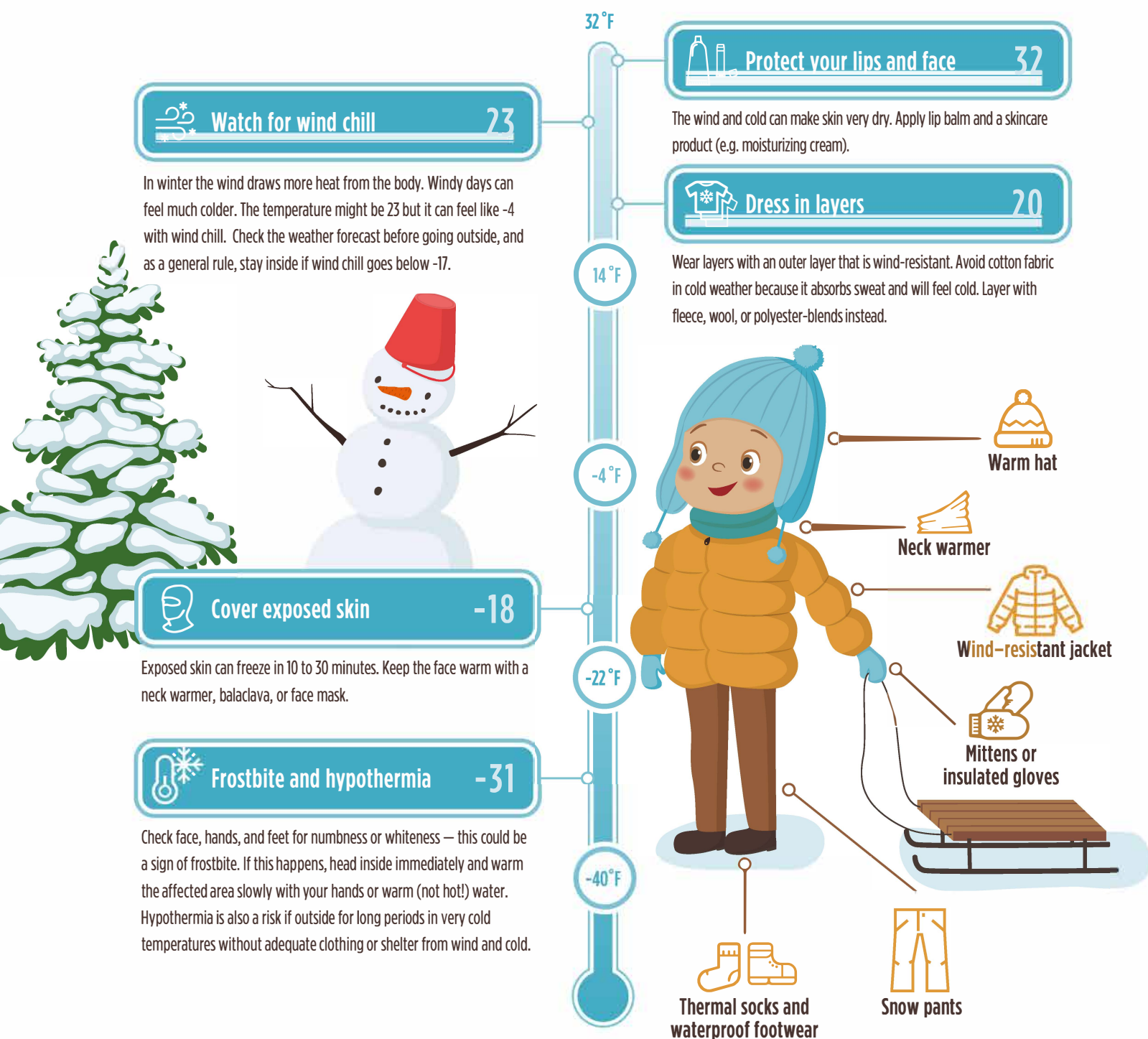


Suggested Participant Handouts

Dressing kids for winter

Playing safely in cold weather

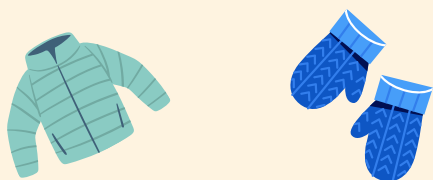
Kids can play outdoors all year long — they just need to be dressed properly for the cold. Staying dry and active will also contribute to how long they can comfortably be outside. Parents: remember, these tips apply to you as well!



Active Play in Cold Weather

Benefits of Outdoor Play for Children

- Boosts immunity
- Exposure to fresh air
- Vitamin D
- Strengthens mental wellbeing
- Improves vision
- Increases amounts of active play



Dressing for the Weather

You may have heard the saying, “there is not bad weather, only poor clothing choices.” Clothing choices can make the difference between unpleasant and wonderful outdoor experiences for both adults and children.

- Make sure children stay dry and keep moving to stay warm.
- Thin layers are most effective for keeping us warm.
- Below 32°F, a hat that covers the ears, gloves or mittens, and a wind and water resistant coat keep us comfortable.
- Boots and snow pants allow for longer periods of outdoor play.



Cold weather does not mean the end of family fun outside!

- Help kids learn to enjoy being active outdoors on the gray, cold days of winter.
- Continue with your child’s favorite outdoor activities.
- Visit local playgrounds.
- Take a walk and explore the winter world.
- Sled play or build a snow castle.
- Bubble play - Bubbles freeze at about 12°F.



Did you know? Colds are caused by viruses, not from cold temperatures

Viruses are more common in winter because cold temperatures keep people indoors in close quarters, allowing viruses to spread through the air more easily. Getting outdoors gives us fresh air!

Optional Table Top Activity Materials (slides 10-13)

Fact or Fiction

Cold weather or being cold causes the common cold

Fact

Colds are caused by viruses, not from cold temperatures

Viruses are more common in winter months as we spend more time indoors where viruses spread easily through the air



Fact or Fiction

We lose most of our body heat through our head

Fact

Adults lose 10% of body heat through their head

Children lose a bit more than 10% as their head is a larger proportion of their total surface area

10% is a significant amount of heat loss and wearing a hat is important for both adults and children in cold weather



Fact or Fiction

We do not need to drink as much water in the winter months

Fact

Cold dry air and heated rooms make hydration just as important in the winter as the summer

Children and ECE providers should have access to water on demand year-round



Fact or Fiction

Windy weather causes ear infections

Fact

Ear infections are usually caused by bacteria from the throat that travel up the eustachian tube

Ear infections are very painful for young children

Keep ears warm and out of the wind with hats



Optional Sample Pre/Post Assessment Questions

1. Recommended practice includes 2-3 outdoor play periods daily for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

True or False

There is not a time recommendation for infant outdoor play. The recommendation for outdoor play for toddlers and preschoolers is 60-90 minutes daily.

2. Cold weather causes colds.

True or False

Most colds are caused by viruses which spread through the air easily indoors. We tend to spend more time indoors during cold weather.

3. The signs of frost nip or frost bite include which of the following:

- a) Red Skin
- b) Blue Lips
- c) Shivering
- d) All of the above

Providers should feel children's hands and face every 10-15 minutes to check for temperature and wetness.

4. Movement helps children and adults stay warm outdoors. One adult role for cold weather outdoor play is leading structured activities that get children moving. Other roles include:

- a) Providing equipment that supports gross motor activities
- b) Sitting while children are outside
- c) Talking with co-workers
- d) Monitoring children

5. Dressing for adults and children to safely play in cold weather below 32 degrees Fahrenheit includes dressing in layers, wearing a hat, coat and insulated gloves or mittens.

True or False

6. Wind chill is a term to describe

- a) A line dance
- b) A milk shake
- c) What the air temperature feels like on the skin due to the air temperature and wind

7. Early care and education providers should be aware of national best practices but are required to comply with state child care administrative regulations, also known as child care licensure. State regulations may not align with national best practices.

True False

8. Children and adults do not need to as much water in the winter as they do in the summer.

True **False**

Cold dry air and heated rooms make hydration just as important in the winter as the summer. Children and caregivers should have access to water on demand year-round.

Additional Resources on Cold Weather Outdoor Play

Books

The Wild Weather Book: Loads of things to do outdoors in rain, wind, and snow (Going Wild) by Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield

Snow Play: How to Make Forts and Slides and Winter Campfires by Birgitta Ralston.

National Wildlife Federation

https://www.nwf.org/-/media/NEW-WEBSITE/Programs/ECHO/How-To-Guides/ECHO_HowTo_WinterPlay.pdf

Safety and Supervision

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/cold-weather-safety>
<https://winterkids.org/blog/dressing-for-winter-safety/>

Activity Ideas

Outdoor play on Winter Days- Penn State Better Kids Care

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/content-areas/environment-curriculum/activities/all-activities/outdoor-play-on-winter-days>

Frozen bubbles <https://runwildmychild.com/frozen-bubbles/#:~:text=The%20process%20for%20the%20bubble,keep%20blowing%20and%20creating%20more.>

Winter Kids Activity Library <https://winterkids.org/blog/move-learn-explore/>
<https://www.plt.org/educator-tips/outdoor-winter-activities-preschool/>
<https://www.threadalaska.org/learn-and-grow/blog/safe-play-in-the-winter>

Dressing, program, and family activities

<https://activeforlife.com/no-equipment-outdoor-games-for-kids/>

https://activeforlife.com/100-outdoor-activities-for-kids/?utm_source=AfL&utm_medium=bottom+read&utm_campaign=no-equipment+games

Resources for Parents

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/winter-safety.html>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/weather-asthma.html?ref=search>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/frostbite.html?ref=search>

Understand the Weather

Wind-Chill



- 30° is **chilly** and generally uncomfortable
- 15° to 30° is **cold**
- 0° to 15° is **very cold**
- -15° to 0° is **bitter cold** with significant risk of **frostbite**
- -15° to -60° is **extreme cold** and **frostbite** is likely
- -60° is **frigid** and exposed **skin will freeze** in 1 minute

Heat Index



- 80° or below is considered **comfortable**
- 90° beginning to feel **uncomfortable**
- 100° **uncomfortable** and may be **hazardous**
- 110° considered **dangerous**

***All temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit



Child Care Weather Watch

Changing weather make it necessary for child care providers to monitor those changes throughout the day. Planning for daily playtime or field trips, weather safety is an important part of child care provider's daily routine. Monitoring the weather is an essential part of addressing the health and safety needs of children in child care.

Use this chart and the helpful links below to help plan for safe daily outdoor time.

Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)										
Air Temperature	Wind Speed in mph									
	Calm	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	
	40	40	36	34	32	30	29	28	28	27
	30	30	25	21	19	17	16	15	14	13
	20	20	13	9	6	4	3	1	0	-1
	10	10	1	-4	-7	-9	-11	-12	-14	-15
	0	0	-11	-16	-19	-22	-24	-26	-27	-29
	-10	-10	-22	-28	-32	-35	-37	-39	-41	-43



Comfortable for outdoor play



Caution



Danger

Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit %)											
Air Temperature (F)	Relative Humidity (Percent)										
	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90
	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85
	84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96
	90	91	93	95	97	100	103	105	109	113	117
	94	97	100	103	106	110	114	119	124	129	135
	100	109	114	118	124	129	130				
	104	119	124	131	137						

Websites:

Air Now Air Quality (check by zip code) <https://www.airnow.gov>

National Weather Service Wind Chill/Heat Index <https://www.weather.gov/ctp/ChillHeat>

Caring for Our Children National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education 4th Ed.

nrckids.org/CFOC

Child Care Weather Watch

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Are unable to tell you if they are too hot or cold.
- NO sunscreen for infants younger than 6 months. Keep infants out of direct sunlight and stay in the shade. Limit the amount of time outdoors.
- Infants older than 6 months of age and toddlers, apply sunscreen to all exposed areas avoiding eyes.
- In cooler or cold months, dress infants in layers to keep them warm.
- Will tolerate shorter periods of outdoor play.

YOUNG CHILDREN

- Remind children to take rest breaks and drink water.
- May insist they are not too hot or cold because they are enjoying playtime.

OLDER CHILDREN

- Need a firm approach to wearing proper clothing for the weather.
- May resist applying sunscreen and drinking water.



Condition GREEN

Children may play outdoors and be comfortable. Watch for signs of children becoming uncomfortable while playing. Use precautions regarding clothing, sunscreen, and beverages for all child age groups.



Condition YELLOW

Use caution and closely observe the children for signs of being too hot or cold while outdoors. Follow guidance in condition green as well.



Condition RED

Infant/toddlers and young children should not play outdoors due to the health risks. Older children may play outside for a very limited time with proper precautions.

What clothing, beverages, and protections are appropriate?

- Clothe children to maintain a comfortable body temperature (warmer months - lightweight cotton, colder months - wear layers of clothing).
- Drinking water helps the body maintain a comfortable temperature. Water should be readily available both inside and outside.
- Sunscreen use is important for children and infants over age six months. Use a sunscreen labeled as **SPF-15 or higher**. Look for sunscreen with **UVA** and **UVB** protection. Sunscreen needs to be reapplied every 2 hours. Read and follow all label instructions for the sunscreen product.
- Shaded play areas protect children from the sun. Make sure to have shade available in your outdoor play area.

The weather forecast may be confusing unless you know the terminology:

- **Blizzard Warning:** There will be snow and strong winds that produce a blinding snow, deep drifts, and life threatening wind chills. Seek shelter immediately.
- **Heat Index Warning:** How hot it feels to the body when the air temperature (in Fahrenheit) and relative humidity are combined.
- **Relative Humidity:** The percent of moisture in the air.
- **Temperature:** The temperature of the air in degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Wind:** The speed of the wind in miles per hour.
- **Wind Chill Warning:** There will be sub-zero temperatures with moderate to strong winds expected which may cause hypothermia and great danger to people, pets and livestock.
- **Winter Weather Advisory:** Weather conditions may cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. If caution is exercised, these situations should not become life threatening.
- **Winter Storm Warning:** Severe winter conditions have begun in your area.
- **Winter Storm Watch:** Severe winter conditions, heavy snow and ice are possible.



www.iowaccrr.org
855-244-5301

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For more information, questions or comments please contact us at PALSECE@nemours.org