

Expert Tips for a Safe and Enjoyable Winter

With colder temperatures and the threat of more snow ahead of us, many adults and children will be heading outside to enjoy their favorite winter activities. State Farm® provides the following tips to make sure everyone has a safe and enjoyable winter!

Before bundling up to head outdoors, be sure to check both the temperature and the wind chill. Wind chill indicates how the air feels on your skin. It can vary dramatically from the actual temperature. You will want to take extra safety precautions since low wind chills and cold temperatures can have dangerous effects on your body, such as frostbite and hypothermia.

Frostbite occurs when parts of your body freeze from prolonged exposure to the cold. Warning signs include: numbness and skin that's white or grayish-yellow and unusually firm or waxy. Hypothermia sets in when your body is losing heat faster than it can produce it. There are several

stages of hypothermia, but common symptoms include: uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, slurred speech and drowsiness.

Victims with frostbite or hypothermia should receive immediate medical attention. For more information on how to respond, review these tips from the American Red Cross.

If you do venture outside, layer up! Wear wool, silk or polypropylene inner layers and a tightly woven or wind-resistant outer layer. Finish off with the essentials: a hat, water-resistant boots, and gloves or mittens. Remove layers as you warm up - sweat can aid in heat loss.

Keep in mind the following safety tips to enjoy your favorite outdoor winter activities:

Skiing and snowboarding
Take lessons on how to stop, slow down and turn.

Never ski or snowboard alone.

Always wear a certified helmet with wraparound

goggles. Identify the appropriate trails for your skill level.

Check your equipment before and after each run and secure loose straps or clothing.

Ice skating and hockey
Stick to ice at least 6 inches thick and free of debris.

Avoid ice that has formed over running water, such as a river.

Always wear a helmet: hockey helmets offer the best protection.

Wear proper hockey equipment, including pads and gloves.

Learn how to properly fall on ice.

Snowmobile cruising
If you are a novice, consider taking a snowmobile or snow machine safety training course before your first outing.

Wear a helmet that meets the current Department of Transportation certification standards, and appropriate cold weather gear, such as a snowmobile suit, snow bib, jackets, and gloves to cut the

wind, repel water and allow ventilation.

Always go snowmobiling in groups and notify someone at home where the group is headed and the expected return time.

Always check the weather conditions before departing, and check your machine's fuel and fluid levels to make sure they are sufficient for the trip. You should also check the machine's overall condition and operation.

Stay on designated trails. Avoid driving on ice, but if it's the only option, wear a life jacket.

Always ride sober, which includes avoiding prescription medications that may affect how you ride.

Carry a first-aid kit, water and non-perishable food in case of a mishap on the trail.

Sledding
Choose a safe sled with a steering mechanism and brake.

Dress appropriately with multiple layers of wind- and

water-resistant clothing. Helmets, which can greatly reduce the chance of head injuries.

Find a safe sledding hill away from busy roads and a long, flat area at the bottom for stopping.

Maintain adult supervision - according to the American

Association of Orthopedic Surgeons, 71% of all sledding injuries occur without adult supervision.

Always sled sitting up and facing forward—never headfirst, facing backward or standing.

Never ride a sled being pulled by a moving vehicle.

Proposal that could change how Medicare Pays for Cancer Therapies

By Wayne Winegarden
Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar just released a sweeping proposal that would drastically change how Medicare pays for advanced cancer therapies and other potent medicines. The plan relies on foreign price controls to reduce drug spending by \$17 billion over five years.

Although drug spending may decline, the plan could increase healthcare spending elsewhere, as patients inevitably lose access to medicines. So while the savings is questionable, the negative health impact on patients is certain. Sec. Azar ought to find a better way.

The changes would affect Medicare Part B, which covers drugs administered in doctor's offices, clinics, and hospitals. These medicines include injectable treatments for cancer and other diseases.

Doctors buy these medicines themselves and then bill Medicare for reimbursement. The government pays doctors the average U.S. price of the drug, plus a markup to cover administrative costs.

Administration officials correctly note these drugs cost more in the United States than in other countries, which impose strict price controls on medications. These countries contribute little to global research and development, but reap the rewards of R&D conducted in the United States.

To end this "global freeloading," the administration wants to create an "International Pricing Index." Medicare would no longer set reimbursements based on the average U.S. sales price. Instead, it would tie reimbursements to the prices paid in 14 other countries -- a practice known as "reference pricing."

These countries enjoy lower

drug costs, thanks to their price controls. But this comes at a cost.

Take the United Kingdom, where a government agency makes unilateral decisions about which medications are worth the money. British patients can't obtain many of the newest medications that Americans take for granted. Americans could access roughly 90 percent of all the medicines released worldwide between 2011 and 2017. British patients could only access two-thirds of those drugs.

In short, the administration's proposal would lower domestic prices -- but only by restricting patients' access to state-of-the-art medicines.

Imposing price controls would also have a chilling effect on research and development. Pharmaceutical investors won't pour billions into risky research projects if there's little chance to earn a return. Breakthrough cures may go undiscovered, dooming millions of future patients.

President Trump has repeatedly promised to protect Americans from foreign free-loaders. His trade negotiators have bashed other countries' reference pricing schemes. And his administration has successfully strengthened intellectual property protections in the revised free trade deal with South Korea and the new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. These stronger IP protections will help create more accurate, market-based prices for U.S. drugs.

Given the anti-price-control actions taken by the rest of the administration, it's shocking that Sec. Azar is embracing such a wrongheaded policy. The proposal might save the government some money, but it would make it harder for patients to get medicines they need.

Learning, Thinking, Caring Webinar Series

Long-term care professionals and other professionals who work with older adults now have an easy and convenient way to participate in professional development. The University of Illinois Extension is proud to present the LTC Webinar Series.

"Learning, Thinking, Caring Webinar Series" is an educational series for professionals that provides timely, research informed, and helpful information and strategies to assist professionals in providing quality care to clientele. Individuals and long-term care facilities can participate at no cost. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) are available for a fee. All sessions are conveniently offered from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. CST.

The series features three dynamic sessions presented by University of Illinois Extension Educators. The first session, "No Bullies Allowed: Senior Bullying in Your Community," will be offered on Thursday, February 21. This session will focus on defining senior bullying, understanding bullying behavior, and discovering the impact of bullying on both victims and bystanders. Potential interventions and strategies to create a respectful, caring community will be emphasized.

The second session will be offered on Thursday, March 21. "Being Mindful in a Busy World: Mindfulness as a Resource for Healthcare Work-

ers," will explore the benefits of mindfulness meditation and review techniques that reduce stress and increase life satisfaction. Practical ideas for including mindfulness in health care settings will be provided.

The final session of the series, "Communication Challenges and Strategies for Helping People with Dementia" will be offered on Thursday, April 18. Featuring information on common communication problems caused by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, this session will review strategies for better interactions with individuals who experience these conditions.

University of Illinois Extension offers programs create learning partnerships that put knowledge to work and aim to make life better, healthier, safer, and more profitable for individuals and their communities. This series is provided free of charge, but advance registration is required. To register, visit go.illinois.edu/2019LTC or call 815-632-3611. For more information, contact Karla Belzer at 815-632-3611 or HYPERLINK "mailto:kbelzer@illinois.edu" kbelzer@illinois.edu. The University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. For reasonable accommodations to participate, please call 815-632-3611.

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