



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Protects Yourself, Loved Ones from Bitter Cold**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Arctic air is blowing through the midwest and extremely cold, dry air is in the forecast. These temperatures can cause a variety of health issues very quickly. Obviously, wear layers of light, warm clothing, mittens or gloves, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots, but also heed these tips from the Kent County Health Department.

**FROSTBITE:** “Anyone with exposed skin can suffer frostbite in a matter of minutes in these frigid temperatures,” says Adam London, Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Frostbite most often affects the extremities: nose, ears, cheeks, fingers, or toes. Redness, numbness or pain, white or grayish-yellow skin, or skin that feels unusually firm or waxy may be frostbitten.” Get the person into a warm room, and immerse the skin in warm (not hot) water.

**RESPIRATORY ISSUES:** Some people are also susceptible to respiratory issues in the cold. “For those with asthma, the cold can also trigger an attack,” London says. “Be sure children with asthma are wearing a scarf, and if they appear to have trouble breathing, get them to a warm, sheltered area immediately.” Adults should refrain from exercising or exerting energy in extreme cold.

**HYPOTHERMIA:** The cold can cause problems for seniors as well, especially hypothermia. “If you know of an elderly person in your neighborhood, check on him or her daily,” London adds. “If you have an elderly neighbor who appears to be lethargic, is shivering, having trouble breathing or talking, is fumbling his or her hands, or is confused, call 911, and start trying to warm the person until medical help arrives.”

**TAKE CARE OF THE INSIDE, TOO:** While indoors, take steps to protect your family from carbon monoxide. Never use grills, camp stoves, and generators inside of the house, the basement, and the garage. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for any generators, grills, or stoves.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).