COLD WEATHER ADVICE FOR PH PATIENTS

• Cold & Flu Season Tips
• Bathing and Primping Safety Tips
• “Staying In” Tips for Making it Great
• Tips for Braving the Cold
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Cold & Flu Season Tips

*Always get a flu shot. Because influenza can lead to more serious conditions, those of us with PH should get a flu shot.
* Never share or take leftover antibiotics.
* Finish your antibiotic prescription even if you start to feel better.
* Stay healthy! Wipe hard surfaces like desks and tables with disinfectant cleaner every day to kill most germs.
* Don’t forget to wash your hands often. Keep in your pocket or purse a small bottle of hand sanitizer (at least 60% Ethyl alcohol).
* If you have to go to a gathering or meeting where there is a large group of people be sure to think about others with snuffles or colds. It may be wise to avoid them this time of year or think about wearing a mask.
* Frequent Hand washing is the most effective means to reduce colds.
* One leader puts a sign on her door saying, “If you have the cold or flu: don’t knock!” You might ask friends who want to visit to take special care and be aware that the cold and flu are particularly difficult for a PH patient.
Bathing and Primping Safety Tips

*Avoid long, hot baths - even though they sound like a warm and wonderful idea, hot baths and showers actually remove your skin's natural moisturizing oils, leaving it dry and itchy. Instead, try shorter, warm soaks or showers. Hot baths, saunas and steam are also not good for a PH patient’s blood circulation.

*If for some reason you find a shower or bathtub too demanding, a great solution is to get a bath stool. This is waterproof and goes right into the tub. It can be removed easily and make a nice seat when giving yourself a pedicure or just drying your feet and legs.

*For bathing, use a hand spray which may be attached to the tub faucet or shower head. You may find bathing this way so pleasant that you will wonder why you didn't always do this.

*A nice, long terry cloth robe will eliminate the effort of drying altogether, just blot.

*Leave the bathroom door open and be sure to use your bathroom exhaust fan if excess humidity bothers you. If you feel weak, don’t take a bath or shower when you are alone.

*It is not necessary to get wet all over, all at once to be clean. A "basin bath" can be taken in place of a tub bath and is a lot less taxing.

*Those using oxygen through a long tube may find it makes bathing easier if the tube is passed over the shower curtain rod and thus out of the way.

*Install hand rails in your bathtub or shower so you can hold onto something stable in case you slip or lose balance.

*Incidentally, it is OK to remove the nasal cannula briefly to wash your face, shave or apply makeup.
“Staying In” – Tips for Making it Great

BEFORE you go outside, prepare for your homecoming:

* Have slippers, throw blanket, warm robe, and everything ready by your front door so that when you arrive, you can switch out from wet, cold winter clothes to warm clothes quickly.
* Lay out your comfortable clothes and slippers.
* Leave a drink in a handy thermos.
* Set out whatever utensils you will need for your evening meal.
* You can even turn down your bed for a quick nap.

* Have your home ready for comfort--whatever makes you feel good and then homecoming can be more than just a relief, it can be a real pleasure.

* Of course we should learn to stop whatever it is we are doing before fatigue sets in, but sometimes this is easier said than done, particularly when away from home. At a time when you are the most apt to be tired, it is lovely to come home and have nothing to do but relax.

* Walk on a treadmill or ride a stationary bicycle inside for exercise if it's too cold to go outside.

* Get online! If you can’t get out of the house, you can socialize with friends or make new friends by going online and utilizing social networks. There are many websites that can offer support and an outlet for conversation:

    Visit PHA’s FaceBook website to start finding fellow PH patients and caregivers.

  - PHA’s Online Community – [http://www.PHAssociation.org/ConnectOnline](http://www.PHAssociation.org/ConnectOnline)
    PHA’s vibrant online community includes online chats and message Boards that are active with conversations about PH or life in general. Start a topic, read current topics and see what other patients are talking about!

    PHA has a Twitter feed where we share the updates, links and breaking news. Some of the people we follow and who follow us are involved in the community.
Tips for Braving the Cold

*You don’t have to stay in all the time if you get cabin fever, but try to limit your time and keep optional excursions to a minimum.

*Some like it hot, some like it cold, some damp, some dry. The point is that if it is your kind of day, try to get out and enjoy it.

*Those of you who do consider outdoor walking may find that a cane seat or shooting stick is a real help. It gives you a cane to lean on and a small seat if you feel like resting.

*One thing which does bother us all considerably is air pollution. Find out where you can get a daily air quality report from your area and use it when making your plans for the day.

*Cold air can take your breath away. In cold weather always wear a mask or a nice long, warm scarf to protect your face and let you breathe warmer air. If you want to blend more in public, you can cover your face with a scarf instead. Masks covering the nose and mouth allow you to breathe your own air which is warmer than the outside air temperature. You can buy painters masks or find them in drugstores. Some, however, prefer a cold-weather mask. There is one being made now of soft sponge which is quite comfortable to wear.

*Prevent hypothermia by wearing layers.

*Wear down coats instead of wool coats; down tends to be lighter and easier to wear while you are out walking. A heavy winter coat can wear you out before you are out the front door. Don’t forget a hat to match!

*Mittens are better than gloves in cold weather-they keep fingers closer together and warmer.

*Use "therma-packs" or hand warmers inside your mittens or gloves (but don’t put directly on skin!) You can slip it in a bag or wear between layers of gloves.

*Oxygen users should carry an extra cannula just in case.

*Get local kids to shovel your snow and help you. Try to delegate some of the physically grueling activities of winter weather (shoveling, de-icing, etc.) so you don’t wear yourself down.
Driving Somewhere? Staying Safe on the Road

*Store extra blankets and warmers in your car.
*Keep extra food and water in your car, too. You never know how long you'll have to wait for help or where you might find yourself if you're stuck.
*Always have extra warm clothes and gear in your car when traveling.
*Store cat litter in your car. It puts more weight in the car and it works if your wheels are stuck in ice!
*Aim vents in your car towards the steering wheel so you can heat up your hands while you're driving.
*Let people know where you are going, especially if you're going alone.
*Always have your cell phone with you, fully charged on trips out.
*Dial 3-11 for non-emergency police.
*Some cell phone services and car insurance plans offer free emergency services included in their costs like roadside assistance and emergency services. Look on your car insurance card for information and an 800 number to call.
*Store flat boxes in your car—they can help you get your car if you’re stuck in a ditch, simply place them under the tires to add more traction to a slippery or icy surface.
TIPS FOR SUPPORT GROUP LEADERS RUNNING MEETINGS DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER

* Volunteers for the American Respiratory Alliance purchased protective foam masks for everyone in one group for cold weather use.
* Another meeting was on beating the cold. The group leader searched for cold weather tips on PHA’s website and printed the information for the group.
* Call your oxygen supplier to see what advice they can give you for managing your oxygen in the winter (they may even be able to bring a speaker to your meeting).
* Your local specialty pharmacy can help with information: Caremark, Curascript and Accredo may have fact sheets, resources and possible speakers.
* Better Breathers national COPD Groups can share advice on who to come into your meeting and speak about how NOT to get sick during the winter. Find one near you to network for more ideas: http://www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/copd/connect-with-others/better-breathers-clubs/
* You might have a local meteorologist come and talk about general tips on beating the cold. Everyone should know winter preparations, icy roads/pavement, snow alerts, etc.
* When road conditions are dangerous and the cold too much to bear, have a "winter weather plan" for meetings. Pre-arrange another date or time if the weather is too cold or road condition too dangerous to travel. One group has a rule that if the weather is bad then the meeting will be cancelled. Include a line on your flyer of the contingency plan (e.g.: "If the city government is closed then our meeting will be cancelled for the month and the speaker will be rescheduled for a future date.")

“Be prepared! The cold weather can affect you very quickly if you're stuck in the cold weather. My car broke down on a bridge in 5 degree weather and 30 mph winds. The cold can overcome you in just a very short amount of time so never take it for granted. “
"I first went on oxygen on New Year’s eve, 2002. We contacted our local electric company. They sent forms for my doctor to fill out and return so that if the power went out our home would be tagged as one of the first to have power restored. We lost electricity almost 2 weeks after that—I learned a lot after that call with our electric company."

**Found in Pathlight...**

The Lehigh-Poconos PH Support Group met in February (2005) in a special conference call meeting. Totowa, NJ, Accredo representative Yusetty Ovalle set up the call and worked with leader Joan Stevenson to experiment with a meeting style that could help bring more members together in the face of severe weather conditions and members’ difficulty with traveling while on oxygen. Says Joan, "the idea is to participate in a support group meeting in the comfort of our own homes-the wind is howling outside my window right now!"

**Tips from Pulmonary Hypertension Resource Network...**

1. Continue with daily exercise but limit your time outside. Walk inside a mall or use a treadmill or stationary bicycle in your home. Exercise with someone or have another person close by, should any problems arise.
2. Talk to your doctor about getting your seasonal flu shot and the pneumonia vaccine. The pneumonia vaccine should be given at least once; check with your doctor if further doses are required.
3. Avoid decongestants or cough suppressing medications that contain dextromethorphan (DM), which causes shallow breathing and the heart rate to increase.
4. Use a humidifier in your home to relieve dry throats and to prevent coughs from the dry cold air. Remember to follow the instructions on cleaning the humidifier and changing the water frequently.
5. Follow your doctor’s directions about fluid consumption; you can become dehydrated even when it’s cold out. Also, consuming warm liquids will help to keep your body temperature up and decrease your heart’s workload.