



Cathedral Area Coop Daycare

Extreme Weather Handbook

Extreme Weather Policy

Cold Weather

- Children are **not permitted** to play outside in extreme cold which is temperatures of **-30C** and lower with or without the wind chill.
- Children are permitted outside to play for **5 to 10 minutes** at a time with proper clothing with temperatures between **-29C and -25C**.
- Children are permitted outside to play for **15 to 20 minutes** at a time with proper clothing between temperatures of **-25C and -20**.
- Children are permitted outside to play for **extended periods** of time with proper clothing at temperatures of **-19 or higher**.

Field Trips

- When the temperature is **-20C** or lower, with or without wind chill, field trips will be cancelled due to the prolonged wait outside for transportation.

Air Quality (Smoke & Poor Air Conditions)

Children's outdoor play is adjusted during periods of poor air quality to protect their health and safety. Outdoor air quality is monitored using the **Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)** issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Outdoor Play Guidelines Based on AQHI:

- **AQHI 1–3 (Low Risk):**

Children are permitted to play outside as usual.

- **AQHI 4–6 (Moderate Risk):**

Children are permitted to play outside for **shortened periods of time**. Staff will closely monitor children for signs of discomfort, coughing, or breathing difficulty. Children with respiratory conditions may remain indoors.

- **AQHI 7 or higher (High to Very High Risk):**

Children are **not permitted to play outside**. All outdoor activities will be moved indoors.

Field Trips: ● When the AQHI is **7 or higher**, outdoor field trips will be cancelled or modified due to prolonged outdoor exposure.

Additional Considerations: In cases of rapidly changing conditions, visible heavy smoke, or public health advisories, the **Director reserves the right** to restrict or cancel outdoor play or outdoor activities at any AQHI level to ensure the safety of children and staff.

Daycare Closures

In extreme storm conditions, the Director reserves the right to close the Daycare early to ensure the safety of children and staff. This decision will be based on weather reports, school and road closures. If a decision is made to close the Daycare, parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their children as soon as possible.

Dressing for Winter

It is important whether your child(ren) is(are) playing outside at daycare or walking to/from school that they are dressed appropriately for the winter weather. For your child to have a great time in the cold weather, the most important thing to consider is appropriate clothing. Here are some tips to make gearing up easier for you and your child(ren).

Layers

Layers are really important for outdoor winter play. If you dress your child in layers, their body heat stays close to them and they are able to play for long periods of time. Also, layers are easy to add or take off as needed, depending on the weather that day. To appropriately dress your child in layers, you will need: a base layer, a middle layer, and an outer layer.

A base layer such as a long polyester shirt wicks moisture away from the skin and keeps your child dry and warm for long periods of time. You want this layer to be snug to the body so that any moisture will be wicked away. The middle layer should be made of down or fleece material, as the purpose of this layer is to insulate the body. You want the middle layer to be close to the body, but make sure that it does not restrain movement. The outer layer should consist of a waterproof winter coat, as this layer protects your child from winter weather elements such as wind, rain, and snow. You want this layer to be loose enough to have at least two other layers under it.

Mittens

Mittens are better for keeping children's hands warm, as fingers generate more heat when they are not separated from each other as in gloves. Gloves are also important to include in your child's backpack because gloves allow better dexterity than mittens. Choose mittens that are waterproof and insulated with either down or a synthetic down.

Headgear

It's important to choose a hat that covers the whole head, including the ears. Hats are also one of those items that can be very personalized and fun, so involve your child in the process of choosing their gear to ensure comfort and likeability. In addition, a scarf or other cover for your child's face and neck is important in protecting their cheeks and nose from the wind and cold.

Snowpants

You want snowpants that your child can move in, is warm, and, most importantly, are somewhat waterproof. Suspenders built into the snowpants will ensure that the pants stay secure and do not fall down during play. Some snowpants also have drawstrings at the bottom to tighten around boots.

Boots

A good children's boot is one that is both warm and stays on during active winter play. You want a boot that is waterproof, is insulated with down or synthetic down, and has drawstrings at the top to ensure a close fit to the legs. This will prevent any water or snow from soaking in. Some boots also have Velcro fasteners over the top of the foot that you can tighten for extra protection. Don't forget to choose a good pair of warm (non-cotton) socks for your child's feet.

Benefits of Cold Weather Play

The Cathedral Daycare is committed to year round healthy play outdoors, but we know when the weather drops into the single digits, it is common to want children to stay indoors to play. However, there are many benefits that cold weather has when it comes to children's health, development, and well-being that we feel is important.

1. Children get to see the outdoors through a new lens

During the summer months, children become used to the warm, green climate that the season has to offer. After the change in season or the first snowfall, children view their environment through a different lens: fallen leaves, brown grass, snow, ice. This new lens enables them to imagine the outdoors differently and to be creative and play in different ways.

2. Increases in Exercise and Using Different Muscles

The winter months provide us with different ways of moving our bodies, such as sledding, walking up a snow hill, or building a snowman. Our larger muscles are put to great use in the winter months due to the challenges that snow provides. This large-muscle use and increase in physical activity support children's gross motor development and overall health.

3. Getting Fresh Air and Avoiding Bacteria

Most adults associate the winter months with getting colds and illnesses such as the flu. However, it is not the cold weather that necessarily causes colds and flus – it is increased exposure to indoor environments where bacteria and viruses live. For example, during the winter months, you turn on your home's heating and venting systems. The bacteria and viruses within your home are continuously being moved around inside. Adults and children who spend long periods of time in a heated and poorly ventilated home, without exposure to fresh air, can easily pass germs to each other.

4. New Challenges and Problem-Solving

Weather that we consider "messy" provides environments and materials that are inspiring and fun for children; for example, patches of ice, large snow hills, and trees covered in snow. These environments provide children with opportunities for new challenges, such as sliding down the ice patch and climbing a snow hill. Engagement with outdoor environments in the winter provokes new problem-solving skills – "How can I slide down this ice patch without falling?" "How fast can I run up this snow hill?" "Can I climb this tree using a branch as a snow pick?" The ever-changing environments that the winter months have to offer provide children with the challenges that they so often crave.

5. Vitamin D Exposure

When we stay indoors during the winter, we are not only missing out on play, but also on necessary vitamins that the outdoor environment gives us. Children get vitamin D through sun exposure, and absorb it even though the sun is not as warm in the winter. Vitamin D helps regulate mental and emotional moods, doing so by increasing serotonin levels in the brain. Serotonin plays an important role in regulating mood and keeping us happy. So the more exposure you have to the sun, the higher your serotonin levels will be. It is recommended that you get at least half an hour of playtime outdoors in the winter.

