

JANUARY NURSE NEWSLETTER

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WINTER SAFETY CHECKLIST

Be Prepared

- Understand that winter weather can change quickly
- Plan ahead to keep your family safe and healthy

Prepare Your Car

- Check tires: use all-weather or snow tires if needed
- Keep gas tank at least half full
- Use winter windshield washer fluid
- Keep an emergency car kit with:
 - Water and snacks
 - Blankets
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - First-aid kit
 - Phone charger
 - Emergency flares

Prepare Your Home

- Check heating systems
- Clean chimneys and fireplaces
- Never leave fires or candles unattended
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Remove ice and snow from walkways
- Keep a home emergency kit with:
 - Flashlights and batteries
 - Medications and first-aid supplies
 - Food and water for power outages

Frozen Ice Safety

- Stay off frozen lakes, ponds, and creeks
- Allow ice activities only with adult approval and supervision
- Teach children to report ice emergencies immediately

Stay Safe Outdoors

- Dress in warm layers
- Wear waterproof boots
- Cover exposed skin (hat, gloves, scarf)
- Take breaks to warm up
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling
- Carry a charged cell phone
- Avoid outdoor activities alone

Prevent Injuries and Falls

- Stretch before shoveling snow
- Push snow instead of lifting
- Stop if chest pain or shortness of breath occurs
- Wear shoes or boots with good traction
- Walk carefully on icy surfaces
- Take small steps and keep hands free
- Allow extra travel time

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Make sure carbon monoxide detectors work properly
- Know symptoms: headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion
- Get fresh air and call for help if exposure is suspected

Keep Phones Charged

- Carry a fully charged cell phone at all times

By planning ahead and following these tips, families can enjoy winter while staying safe.

Stay warm and be safe this winter! ❄️😊

MENTAL & EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Returning from winter break can be stressful for some students, as routines have been disrupted. Encourage children to talk about their feelings and try simple mindfulness or deep breathing exercises to manage stress. Keeping consistent routines for meals, sleep, and schoolwork helps provide stability. Families and teachers can promote kindness and empathy as students reconnect with peers. Tip for students: Take a few deep breaths whenever you feel overwhelmed—just 3 slow breaths can help you feel calmer!



THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CORNER

Lead Testing for Kindergarten Students

In Iowa, state law requires that all students entering kindergarten have at least one blood lead level test. This test helps identify whether a child has been exposed to lead, which can be harmful to their health.

There are two types of blood lead tests: capillary and venous.

- A capillary blood lead test is usually used as a screening test. It shows whether your child may have been exposed to lead within the past 3–4 months. A small amount of blood is taken from the finger, heel, or arm.
- If the capillary test shows an elevated lead level, a venous blood test is recommended. This test is done by drawing blood from a vein and is more accurate.

Why Lead Testing Is Important

Lead exposure often does not cause immediate or obvious symptoms, but repeated exposure can lead to serious and permanent health problems. These may include:

- Lower IQ
- Brain and nervous system damage
- Learning disabilities
- Behavior problems
- Hearing loss
- Slowed growth
- Anemia
- Digestive issues
- Kidney damage

Children are especially vulnerable because their brains and nervous systems are still developing. Even small amounts of lead can interfere with healthy development.

Common Sources of Lead Exposure

Children may be exposed to lead from:

- Homes built before 1978, which may contain lead-based paint and dust
- Older plumbing, as lead pipes were not fully banned until 1986
- Soil near older buildings or highways, which may contain lead particles

If your child spends time in an older home or your family has recently moved into one, it is important to talk with your primary care provider about lead testing.