

Baltimore County Public Schools
COLD WEATHER ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

In Maryland, it is unusual for air temperatures to be so cold that outside activities are absolutely unsafe. Temperatures less than 40°F can result in hypothermia and/or frostbite; temperatures above 40°F can cause hypothermia if the person's clothing has become saturated with water. Consequently, cold is an important factor to consider when planning outside activities. The following factors should be considered when planning outdoor activities in cold weather:

- Wind – Wind increases the rate of heat loss from the body. Wind chill values assist to calculate the level of danger from freezing temperatures and wind. For the current table of wind chill values, see <http://www.weather.gov/om/windchill/>.
- Clothing – Layered clothing, appropriate for the temperature, can mitigate or eliminate the effects of cold. Multiple layers of tightly woven clothing are recommended for cold, windy weather. Clothing that is wet is significantly less effective at protecting the individual from the effects of cold. Minimizing the amount of skin that is exposed to the cold air by wearing hats and gloves will reduce the chance that a child suffers from symptoms of cold exposure. Students with inadequate clothing for the temperature/conditions should not be permitted to participate in outdoor activities.
- Acclimatization – Sudden changes in temperature or temperatures that are markedly abnormal for the region are more likely to result in cold symptoms
- Health Status – Some health conditions, like asthma, can be exacerbated by exposure to cold air. Students with heart conditions may be told to avoid intense exercise in cold temperatures since cold increases the strain on the heart.
- Length of time to be outside – The length of exposure to the cold air is directly correlated with the risk of cold exposure. Outdoor activities should be brief (30 minutes or less) in cold weather.
- Inclement weather –In general, outdoor activities should be avoided when it is raining or snowing because students' clothing may become wet and less effective at protecting them from cold.

The first sign that a student is too cold is shivering; any student with persistent (more than momentary) shivering should be sent inside to warm up. Any student with signs of hypothermia (prolonged shivering, exhaustion, confusion, clumsiness, memory loss, slurred speech or drowsiness) should be sent immediately to the school nurse.

Frostbite is an injury to skin from exposure to cold. Appropriately dressed students should never encounter risk of frostbite from outside activities; nonetheless, teachers should be alert to symptoms of frostbite, which include white or gray skin and stinging sensation or numbness in the affected area. Frostbite is most likely to occur on the face, hands, and feet. Students with suspected symptoms of frostbite should be immediately sent inside to the school nurse.