



## **MEDICAL HEALTH AND COLD WEATHER**

Working in cold weather can have a greater impact on people with underlying health issues. Those people who take certain medications, are in poor physical condition or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure) or cardiovascular disease may be at increased risk during cold weather exposure.

### **INCREASED BLOOD PRESSURE**

For people with hypertension, colder weather can increase their blood pressure to levels higher than normal. Cold weather narrows blood vessels, leaving less room for blood flow which, in turn, raises blood pressure. The heart must pump harder to circulate blood through constricted blood vessels. As a result, your blood pressure and heart rate increase. Higher-than-normal blood pressure and increased heart rate can potentially lead to a heart attack.

### **CAFFEINE USE AND COLD TEMPERATURES**

Blood pressure can go up significantly after caffeine use because it can block a hormone that keeps our arteries open wide. The blood vessels supplying blood to the brain can narrow as much as 27% after caffeine intake. Together, caffeine and cold temperatures can put those with underlying heart issues at greater risk.

### **MEDICAL CONDITIONS AFFECTED BY PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO COLD TEMPERATURES**

Excessive cold stresses the body, causing it to release hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol. Cortisol, the hormone released into the bloodstream during stressful situations, helps regulate the body's sugar, salt and fluid levels. Elevated cortisol over the long term produces glucose, leading to increased blood sugar levels. For those with diabetes, this can be dangerous.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- Reduce caffeine intake if you are being treated for hypertension or other cardiovascular issues.
- Be aware of possible medical complications with your medications while you're working in cold weather.
- Dress in layers and keep your head and hands covered.
- Keep extra gloves, hats and jackets available.
- Take frequent breaks in a warm, dry area.
- If someone shows signs of cold-related stress or injuries, get them to warmth immediately.



**Company Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project #/Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Person Conducting Meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Items Discussed**

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**Problem Areas or Concerns**

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**Attendees**

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**Comments**

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