

Brrrr. It's Cold Outside!

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Across most of North Carolina, we are fortunate enough to experience much of the weather the four seasons offer. We also play soccer year around which means our kids are accustomed to playing in all sorts of weather conditions. You have without a doubt heard all the warnings about playing in the heat but what happens when the cold weather hits?

Just like heat and humidity, low temperatures and a wind chill factor can negatively impact performance if you are not accustomed to it; your body loses heat at a much more rapid rate when it's cold outside and therefore cannot function at the same level if you are ill prepared. U.S. Soccer suggests the following cold weather safety tips for players, coaches and referees:

- **Layer Up!** You do not want to overdress but you do need to have the ability to add or remove layers as your body temperature and the environmental conditions around you change. Gloves, hats/headbands and sweatpants are always encouraged. Effective layering looks like this:



- **Stay Dry!** Wet and damp conditions increase the risk of cold related injuries. If it's cold outside and steadily raining, it would be smart to replace those layers with dry clothing if possible. Having gloves, dry jackets, extra hats, etc. available on the sideline to keep warm during substitutions is ideal. The longer you stand around wet and cold, the quicker you're going to get sick!
- **Stay Hydrated!** The last thing you might want to do when you're cold is drink cold water but it is for this reason that it is so important to stay hydrated during the cold weather. The cold weather reduces our ability to recognize when we become dehydrated so if you're thirsty, it's too late. Try keeping warm or even hot water in your water bottle so it doesn't freeze while playing!
- **Take Action!** If you or someone on your sideline seems to be suffering from a cold-related injury, seek medical attention immediately if there is a Certified Athletic Trainer on site. If not, try your best to move the person out of the elements into a warm place and try to raise their body temperature by adding layers. Frostbite and hypothermia are the two most common cold related illnesses. Following the guidelines above are a great way to prevent heat loss that can lead to such conditions.
- **Pay Attention!** Coaches, administration, medical staff and referees should take both the wind speed and the temperature in to account to determine the Wind Chill Temperature (WCT) so that a determination can be made as to whether or not it is safe to play soccer outdoors. Guidelines to help determine what they call your "alert level" for playing in cold weather can be found on U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover website.

Sources:

1. U.S. Soccer Federation "Recognize to Recover" – www.recognizetorecover.org
2. Korey Stringer Institute