

Tips For Cold-Weather Hikes With Tikes

(NAPS)—There's nothing quite so rejuvenating as a day spent exploring the late fall or winter woods. The air is crisp and bracing. Summer crowds are gone. And, if snow is blanketing the landscape—it's a winter wonderland.

Of course, before you go, you'll dress yourselves and the little ones in layers that include:

- a wicking synthetic for the base (underwear) layer;
- a wool or synthetic fleece or pile middle (pants and torso) layer;
- and a breathable, wind- and water-repellent outer shell.

Top off each outfit with a warm hat and mittens—not gloves—and warm socks and boots.

Dressing properly is an essential step for a winter hike with your children. But according to Terry Krautwurst, Gorp.com contributing editor, there are some other important things you can do to ensure a safe outing.

Watch The Weather

Before you leave home, check the day's forecast. If rain or wet snow—or even a strong wind—is a possibility, consider calling the trip off. Even the best rain gear won't keep its wearer dry entirely. Wet combined with cold temperatures spells real danger.

Keep Your Trips Short

In winter, and especially in snow, everything takes longer. A foot of snow can more than double the time and energy it takes to hike a given distance. Add kids and a few of winter's distractions—animal tracks, snowball fights, icicles, etc.—and you may as well double the time again.

Always Bring Matches Or A Lighter

Better yet, put a full-blown commercial survival kit in your pack. But never leave home without at least a flame source for starting an emergency fire.



Watch out for frostbite. A child complaining of painful or “tingly” fingers may be in danger.

Use Extra Caution Around Water

In cold air, a single soaked foot from an accidental plunge can be trouble. Don't assume that ice is thick enough to walk on. Water conducts heat away from the body 25 times faster than air. So, if you can't replace soaked shoes or clothing with dry ones, head for home.

Food And Liquid

Oddly, appetites—even those of a normally ravenous child—diminish in cold temperatures. But you need to keep your family well-fed and hydrated, even though they may not feel particularly hungry or thirsty. A dehydrated person is much more susceptible to hypothermia.

Watch For Frostbite

Fingers, toes, ears and nose—those are the areas most likely to be frostbitten, and children are the ones most likely to fall victim. Genuinely frostbitten tissue appears white, but a child complaining of painful or “tingly” fingers, may be in danger. Never rub the areas rigorously. You could damage the tissue irreversibly. Immerse the area in water that just barely feels warm to you—it should not be hot—and call a doctor.

By exercising common sense and caution, you and your family can explore the winter woods without worry. So go ahead, with good preparation—concern for the cold shouldn't keep you from enjoying the outdoors.