

## GROUPS MORE VULNERABLE TO COLD

**Infants** and **elder people** are especially susceptible to cold weather because of their lack of perception regarding temperature changes.

Other groups who are also vulnerable to the cold:

- people that have chronic diseases, especially cardiac, vascular, respiratory and rheumatic diseases, diabetes and thyroid diseases;
- people have mental health problems and suffer from alcoholism;
- people taking certain medications such as psycho-tropic or anti-inflammatory drugs;
- people that are isolated and have low mobility;
- social excluded people.

### REMEMBER THE ELDER AND ISOLATED

Check up on friends, relatives and neighbors who may be more vulnerable to cold weather. Cold weather is especially dangerous for older people or people with serious illnesses, so check up on them if you can.

Cold Weather alerts are issued through the **COLD MODULE PLAN** surveillance.



Registered temperatures that don't have significant impact on the populations' health.



Registered temperatures that can lead to the deterioration of health status in more vulnerable groups and that can lead to a reduction of comfort conditions in the general population. It is recommended to take individual preventive and protective actions.



Registered temperatures that may affect the general populations' health status and comfort and, more severely, vulnerable population groups. It is recommended to take collective and individual preventive and protective actions.



**ARS ALGARVE IP**

**Public Health & Planning Department**

# ADVERSE EXTREME TEMPERATURE Surveillance Plan

**- COLD MODULE -**

**November 15th - March 31st**

**Keep informed this winter**

**Stay tuned for daily alerts**

**Know how to protect yourself**

**Administração Regional de Saúde do Algarve IP**

Regional Health Administration of Algarve IP

## Extreme Adverse Temperature Surveillance Plan – Cold Module

### INTENSE COLD

Exposure to cold weather - **DIRECT** consequences:

**FROSTBITE** is an injury to the skin and other tissues due to cold (usually the nose, ears, fingers or toes). The first symptoms are a tingling sensation followed by pain. There may also be swelling and itching. The risk of frostbite is higher in people with blood circulation problems or in people that don't wear appropriate clothing. In the most serious cases it can cause permanent damage to the body and even amputation.

**HYPOTHERMIA** occurs when the body temperature drops significantly below normal (<35 ° C) and affects the functioning of the body. The situation may be critical or fatal when the body temperature falls below 32 °C. The early warning signs of hypothermia are: constant shivering, pale skin, slurred speech, drowsiness and loss of coordination.

**There is a link between the onset of cold weather and deaths from both heart attacks and respiratory illnesses. Older people are particularly at risk as they don't feel the cold until their body temperature falls. People with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease also have a significantly increased risk of ill-health and hospitalization during periods of cold weather and high levels of circulating respiratory infections.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### CLOTHING:

- cover your extremities (hands, feet, head);
- wear several light layers of warm clothes rather than one chunky layer;
- prefer fabrics like cotton, linen and silk;
- keep clothes dry and loose (helps the blood circulation).

#### AT HOME:

- to improve energy efficiency, make sure that windows and doors are draught-proof;
- make sure that gas, coal and other fossil fuel and wood- burning heating and cooking appliances are properly installed, ventilated and maintained (Carbon monoxide poisoning is difficult to spot as the symptoms are very similar to those for flu and food poisoning including persistent headaches, sickness and tiredness);
- don't use electric heaters near curtains and not use them to dry clothes;
- install a thermometer in a visible location to keep temperature between 19-22 °C.

### HEALTH CARE:

- be careful with your personal hygiene, take a warm rather than a hot showers (hot water removes the natural layer of skin protection and makes skin feel more dry and itchy);
- hydrate the whole body (hands, feet, face and lips).

### MEALS:

- make sure that you have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day (drink warm liquids like soup, tea, milk) and maintain a healthy diet (rich in vitamins and minerals) that protects against infections;
- keep as active in your home as possible.

For more recommendations:  
[www.arsalgarve.min-saude.pt](http://www.arsalgarve.min-saude.pt)  
[www.dgs.pt](http://www.dgs.pt)

For more advice use Health Line 24  
808 24 24 24