

Advisor

Families

Helping

Families

MAP, an anxiety management program based on cognitive-behavioural therapy

MAP is an online resource for parents and caregivers to “coach” anxious children or teens using practical strategies and tools to manage anxiety.

Foster Parent Informational & Monthly Sessions

Please stay connected and watch your emails to register for courses being offered to Caregivers.

How to Navigate the Holidays as a Foster Family

Foster children may face mixed emotions during this period and are challenged with adjusting to new traditions.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Home Safety

Keeping Kids Safe & Warm outside

Life Books

Making Food Fun for the Holidays



www.saskfosterfamilies.ca

Advisor

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OUR MISSION

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage Foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth across the province.

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MONTHLY LIVE STREAMED

Information Session Features
are as follows:

JANUARY 28TH, 2025

Grief & Loss presented by Deb Mooney, SEP (Registered Social Worker and Somatic Experiencing Practitioner). Deb will cover topics related to Grief & Loss surrounding children entering and exiting care and effects on caregivers and family members. Deb has a unique lens on this topic as she worked many years with the Ministry of Social Services in several roles before branching into her own practice. Deb is also a contracted counsellor with Victim Services and Non-Insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit peoples, completed inter-provincial assessments for organizations and partnered with Valiant Recovery Treatment and Recovery Center for aftercare counselling so has a variety of experiences and resources to assist individuals in their healing journey's.

FEBRUARY - DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Canadian Centre for Child Protection will be hosting a session on **Risks, Trends and Prevention of Online Child Sexual Violence.**

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a national charity dedicated to the protection of all children. The Canadian Centre operates Cybertip.ca, Canada's tipline for the reporting of online child sexual exploitation. This presentation will explore the issue of online sexual violence and unwanted sexual actions and behaviours directed towards youth online, as seen through the lens of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Over the past year, **Cybertip.ca** has seen increasing online victimization and intensifying control tactics of offenders. This underscores the critical need to teach youth skills that help them navigate online situations safely and the information on where to go for help if someone is harming them online. The presentation will include discussion on how the Centre supports youth and families and works to minimize the circulation of the image/videos.

MARCH - SESSION & DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Foster Parent College Monthly Sessions

Please watch your emails to register for the below courses being offered to caregivers. For more information, please contact Tessa at 306-975-1528.

JANUARY

Parenting a Child Who Was Substance Exposed

This class explores parenting children who were substance exposed, including:

- risk and protective factors
- effects of prenatal substance exposure and drug endangerment
- attachment and temperament
- parenting approaches

FEBRUARY

The Impact of Fostering on Birth Children

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- explain the three phases of a foster placement
- explain how birth children may feel in each phase
- know how to ease foster family stress in each phase

MARCH

Running Away

This course explores five types of running away behaviour with children:

- searching for roots
- running from rules
- running from love and intimacy
- wanting to be wanted
- running to street crime



Let's stay connected...

We regularly send out e-mails to our foster parents. To be added to our contact list and receive the latest news, please send your e-mail address to keanna@sffa.sk.ca



MAP

A valuable resource for Parents & Caregivers

My Anxiety Plan (MAP) is an anxiety management program based on cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), which is an evidence-based psychological treatment that was developed through decades of scientific research and has been shown to be one of the most effective treatments for anxiety problems. MAP is a resource for parents and caregivers to “coach” anxious children or teens using practical strategies and tools to manage anxiety. MAP includes 6 units with 46 lessons.

Unit 1: Starting the Journey: Understanding Anxiety. The lessons in this unit highlight key information and facts about anxiety, so that you and your child can become anxiety experts. The lessons will also help you and your child take some initial steps to get ready to tackle anxiety.

Unit 2: Calming Strategies: Learning to Chill. In Unit 2, lessons focus on helping your child or teen learn relaxation and mindfulness strategies to help them “ride out” the physical sensations of anxiety.

Unit 3: Helpful Thinking: Talking Back to Anxiety. Learning to be a balanced thinker is a core strategy for coping with anxiety. In this unit, you will help your child or teen learn how to catch, evaluate, and change their anxious thinking.

Unit 4: Facing Fears: Exposure. Unit 4 outlines one of the most powerful tools for managing anxiety. You will learn how to help your child or teen overcome their fears by gradually facing them one step at a time.

Unit 5: Continuing the Journey: Staying on Track. Help your child or teen prepare for the future with strategies aimed at maintaining their gains and keeping anxiety in check. Unit 5 highlights the importance of a solid foundation and helping your child or teen develop a plan to prevent anxiety from making a come back.

Unit 6: Special Topics. Your child or teen may have some specific fears or be faced with situations that are challenging in unique ways that require

specialized tools. In this final unit, get additional information and strategies to tackle other problem areas that your child may need help with.

Who is this Program for?

The MAP program was designed as a self-help program for parents or caregivers to support children and teens with mild to moderate anxiety problems. It can also be used by educators to better understand anxiety and learn about key tools for helping students manage anxiety that can also be used in school settings. Although MAP was designed to be used on your own, it can also be used while working with a mental health professional who can guide you through it.

How to Work Through this Program?

We encourage you to review the material on your own first, and once you're familiar with it, work through it with your child or teen. Make sure to work through the various units and lessons at your own pace. As this is a journey and not a race, you may choose to go through all 6 units, lesson by lesson, over the course of weeks or months. Alternatively, you may prefer to skip around the various units, focusing only on relevant lessons, knowing you can return at a later date and work through the rest. This content can be reviewed and learned via computer screen, and worksheets and forms can be filled out and printed. Finally, you and your child can decide whether you wish to schedule formal "coaching" time on a weekly basis to review the lessons, or whether you prefer to do this work when the timing feels right even if this

is at less regular times or intervals. The point is that there is no "right" way to use this material, and while it is recommend to proceed through the units and lessons in the specified order, the goal is to inspire your child to learn and if this means working out of sequence, the MAP program can be used in this way.

When to Seek Professional Help?

Working through this material can be challenging, especially if your child or teen is struggling with more moderate to severe anxiety issues. If your child has been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder the information and strategies in the program may not be sufficient. If you're struggling to get your child to use the strategies or your child or teen's symptoms persist or worsen despite working through the program, seek professional help. Talk to your family doctor and find a therapist who specializes in CBT.

Getting Started

You can begin by visiting this online link for additional information on how to get started.

<https://maps.anxietycanada.com/courses/anxiety-plan-children-teens/>

It is recommended that you set up an account so you can work through the program at your own pace and your progress is automatically saved. After registration and anytime you need to return to the beginning of the course, you can.



Did you know?

Automobile safety seats for the foster parent's use are charged to a child care file and paid as a purchase order through the FYAP system.

Need to know:

- Transportation for children in care must be provided in accordance with Highway Traffic Board regulations.
- At the time of placement, foster parents and adopting parents are expected to have an appropriate automobile safety seat with them.
- Infant carriers should comply with the Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards established by Transport Canada

For more information see: Section 7.12 of the Children's Services Policies and Procedures Manual.



Call it a clan,
call it a network,
call it a tribe,
call it a family.
Whatever you
call it, whoever
you are—you
need one.

– Jane Howard

What Foster Parents *Wish* Others Knew

If you are a foster parent or have been one in the past, you'll understand that with the responsibility of caring for a child also comes a great deal of questioning from family, friends and work colleagues. A lack of common knowledge of how fostering operates and a natural curiosity of how it comes to influence everyday family life drives an interest, but when you've got the accountability of helping a new child settle in, sometimes you wish the questions would wait. Covering some of the most commonly asked questions, here are issues foster parents wish others knew.

We're not just babysitters

Children may be placed in our care for a short period of time as a support system, and others may stay forever. What matters the most is that we care about each and every one of them and we most certainly look at it more than just a job. While they are part of the family they're our children; we treat them no different than if they were our own.

We miss them once they're gone

Sometimes people in your life go away, that doesn't stop them from being important to you. They were part of our lives and they will be missed. Let us talk about the children that have left our care and how much we miss them. There may be another child coming into our care soon but that doesn't mean we think foster children are interchangeable.

They aren't our child—yet

Assumptions are made that you foster in order to have a child of your own, but often this isn't the case. Many foster children will go home or to other family members. If we do decide to adopt a child we have been fostering, it can take a long time to go through the adoption process. We appreciate your interest but please don't keep asking.

Sometimes we need a helping hand

Even if our foster child is older, it can be as exhausting and stressful as having a new baby. A helping hand with everyday necessities such as cleaning or looking after the other children in the family will always be welcome, the support of family and friends is invaluable.

A book shouldn't be judged by its cover

Some people may have preconceived ideas about looked after children, please don't make assumptions and don't be judgmental. Be careful about what you say in front of our foster children. Put yourself in the child's position; it would be horrible for them to hear people they don't know or trust speculate about their families and future. Why not share this with your family and friends as a way to provide them with a more complete view of the foster parenting experience. Who knows it might even inspire them to consider giving foster parenting a try too!

Source: <https://www.nfa.co.uk/news-and-blog/what-foster-parents-wish-others-knew/>



Life Books



A Life Book is intended to provide a permanent history for a child by recording as many significant events in the child's life as possible in order to prevent gaps due to removal from home or placement changes.

Children who live with their birth families have the opportunity to grow up surrounded by the history of events in their lives. Children who come into care are often denied this opportunity. Changes in placements can mean living with different families in different neighbourhoods. Long periods of time spent in care can mean that the past may be confusing or forgotten. Children have a right to know who they are and where they have come from. Life Books can help children understand and accept their past and help to make sense of what is happening to them. Life Books may also provide an opportunity for the child to discuss his or her feelings about the recorded information.

The Life Book may be used to:

- Help a child resolve questions about his past and separation issues.
- Provide an opportunity for the child to discuss their feelings about the recorded information.
- Provide the child with something that is their own.
- Prepare the child for a move to a foster or adoption home.

The Life Book is the property of the child and should accompany the child whenever they move. The child

should decide whether they will share their book, with whom they will share their book, and when they will share their book.

Information to be included:

- History of the child's developmental milestones
- Descriptive infancy/toddler growing experiences
- Growth and weight chart
- Education (report cards, awards, certificates, artwork, outings)
- Cultural Activities
- Recreation (team pictures, awards)
- Religious/Spiritual activities
- Family Contact (list who, when, where, what)
- Family Background (genogram/family tree)
- Pictures (family, friends, pets, caregivers, holidays)
- Anything else the child feels is important.

The SFFA has a library of templates to be utilized for children's life books. Visit online at https://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/__media__downloads/Life-Books-templates.pdf. You are able to print pages of your own or request printed pages through the SFFA Advocate. To request pages please preview the master copy and make note of the number associated with each page and contact the Advocate at 306-975-1591.

How to NAVIGATE the *Holidays* as a Foster Family



Navigating the holiday season can be a magical and joyous time, but for foster families, it often comes with unique challenges and considerations. Foster children may face mixed emotions during this period, grappling with memories of past holidays and adjusting to new traditions.



The Unique Needs of Foster Children During the Holidays

The holiday season, often depicted as a time of joy and family togetherness, can present a complex array of emotions and challenges for foster children. Understanding and addressing their unique needs during this period is crucial for foster families to create a nurturing and supportive environment. Here's a deeper look into these unique needs and considerations:

1. Emotional Sensitivity

Holidays can evoke a wide range of emotions for foster children. They may feel sadness, grief, or longing for their biological families and past traditions. It's important for foster parents to recognize these emotions and offer a supportive space where children can express their feelings without fear of judgment.

2. Cultural and Familial Differences

Foster children come from diverse backgrounds with their own cultural and familial traditions. The stark contrast between their past holiday experiences and current ones can be disorienting and challenging. It's essential for foster families to show sensitivity to these differences and incorporate elements of the child's traditions into the holiday celebrations.

3. Sense of Belonging

Foster children may struggle with feelings of belonging, especially during family-centric holidays. Foster parents can help by including them in family traditions and making them feel like an integral part of the holiday celebrations. This could be as simple as involving them in decorating the house or preparing a holiday meal.

4. Dealing with Trauma

For some foster children, holidays might trigger traumatic memories or feelings. Foster parents need to be prepared to provide additional emotional support or seek professional help if necessary. It's crucial to have a plan in place for managing potential triggers and ensuring the child's mental well-being.

5. Adjusting to New Environments

Foster children who have recently moved into a new home might find the holidays particularly overwhelming. The unfamiliar environment, coupled with the pressure of holiday festivities, can be stressful. Foster families should focus on creating a calm, welcoming, and understanding atmosphere.

6. Continuity and Stability

Maintaining some level of routine and predictability during the holiday chaos can provide comfort and stability to foster children. While it's exciting to engage in holiday activities, it's equally important to uphold certain regular routines to provide a sense of normalcy. By being attuned to these unique needs, foster families can significantly enhance the holiday experience for foster children. The goal is to create a holiday environment that acknowledges and respects their past, embraces them in the present, and contributes positively to their emotional and psychological well-being.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

Creating a welcoming environment for foster children during the holidays is crucial in helping them feel safe, valued, and included. This goes beyond mere physical comfort; it's about fostering an atmosphere of warmth, understanding, and belonging. Here are key strategies to create such an environment:

1. Embrace Inclusivity in Decorations

When decorating your home, consider incorporating elements that reflect the cultural and personal background of your foster child. This could include ornaments, colors, or symbols that represent their heritage or past holiday experiences. Such gestures can make them feel seen and respected.

2. Establish a Safe and Comfortable Space

Ensure that the foster child has a personal space where they feel secure and can retreat if they feel overwhelmed. This could be their bedroom or a specific area in your home. Make this space comforting with items like soft blankets, soothing colors, and perhaps a few items that they have brought with them.

3. Create New Traditions Together

Involve your foster child in creating new holiday traditions. This can be a collaborative activity where everyone shares and integrates their favorite holiday customs. This not only makes the child feel included but also helps build a bond with the family.

4. Foster Open Communication

Encourage open communication and let the child know that their thoughts and feelings are valid and important. This could involve regular check-ins or simply making yourself available for conversations whenever they need.

5. Plan for a Balanced Holiday Experience

While it's exciting to participate in holiday festivities, it's also important to not over-schedule. Keep the holiday routine balanced with a mix of activities and downtime. This approach helps in reducing stress and anxiety that could come with a packed and unfamiliar holiday schedule.

Continued....



6. Sensitive & Respectful Approach to Gift-Giving

Be thoughtful about gift-giving. For some foster children, this aspect of the holidays can be complex. It's important to understand their comfort level and preferences – some might appreciate personal gifts, while others might find them overwhelming.

7. Involve Them in Decision Making

Let the foster child have a say in holiday plans. This could range from deciding the holiday menu to choosing a movie for a family movie night. Feeling that their opinion matters can significantly boost their sense of belonging.

8. Normalize the Range of Emotions

Make it clear that it's okay to feel a range of emotions during the holidays. The festive season can be tough, and letting them know that it's normal to feel happy, sad, excited, or even indifferent helps in building a trusting and understanding relationship.

9. Creating a welcoming environment for foster children during the holidays is about blending sensitivity, inclusivity, and warmth. It's about making them feel that they are an integral part of the family's holiday experience, respecting their past, and helping them build positive new memories.

Dealing with Emotional Ups and Downs

Dealing with the emotional ups and downs of foster children during the holiday season requires a great deal of empathy, patience, and understanding. The holidays often bring a mix of excitement and stress for many, but for foster children, this time can be particularly challenging, often stirring a complex blend of emotions.

“ *Sometimes, it's not about finding immediate solutions or offering advice, but rather about being present and showing understanding.”*

Understanding the root of these emotional fluctuations is key. For a foster child, the holidays may be a reminder of past experiences, lost family connections, or traditions that they no longer participate in. These memories can trigger feelings of sadness, grief, or anxiety. On the other hand, the joy and warmth of the season can also bring positive emotions, creating a bittersweet experience.

Foster parents can play a crucial role in helping children navigate these feelings. This begins with creating a supportive and open environment where children feel safe to express their emotions, knowing they won't be judged or dismissed. Active listening is essential. When a child shares their feelings, giving them undivided attention and acknowledging their emotions can make a significant difference.



Sometimes, it's not about finding immediate solutions or offering advice, but rather about being present and showing understanding. This validation can be comforting to a child who is struggling with complex emotions.

In addition to emotional support, maintaining a sense of normalcy and routine during the holiday season can also provide stability. While it's enjoyable to partake in festive activities, keeping some regular routines intact helps foster a sense of security and predictability.

In situations where emotional challenges become more intense or persistent, it might be necessary to seek professional help. Therapists or counselors who specialize in working with foster children can provide valuable support and guidance. They can offer strategies to manage difficult emotions and address underlying issues in a safe and therapeutic setting.

Handling Sensitive Topics and Questions

Handling sensitive topics and questions with foster children, especially during the holiday season, requires a delicate balance of empathy, respect, and understanding. The holidays can often bring up questions about a foster child's past, their biological family, or their experiences before joining the foster family. Here are some guidelines for navigating these sensitive areas:



1. Prepare for Questions in Advance

Anticipate that both the foster child and others (like extended family or friends) might have questions or make comments that can be sensitive. Think about how to address these topics in a way that is respectful to the child's privacy and emotions.

2. Open and Honest Communication

Foster a home environment where open and honest communication is encouraged, but also where the privacy and boundaries of the foster child are respected. Let them know that it's okay to share as much or as little as they are comfortable with.

4. Be a Buffer When Needed

Be prepared to step in and redirect conversations if they are heading in a direction that might be uncomfortable or hurtful for the foster child. It's essential to protect them from potentially traumatic or intrusive interactions.

3. Educate Family and Friends

Briefly educate your family and friends about appropriate and sensitive interactions with the foster child. It's important to ensure that they understand the importance of not prying into the child's past or making insensitive remarks.

5. Responding to the Foster Child's Questions

When foster children ask questions about their situation or past, answer them honestly but appropriately, keeping in mind their age and emotional maturity. If you don't have all the answers, it's okay to admit it and offer to find out together if possible.

6. Respect Their Privacy

Always respect the foster child's privacy. Avoid sharing details about their past or personal circumstances with others unless you have the child's permission or it's absolutely necessary.

7. Seek Professional Guidance

If certain topics are particularly challenging or if the child is struggling with aspects of their past, don't hesitate to seek advice from professionals like social workers or therapists.

8. Emotional Support

Be emotionally available and supportive. Let the child know that it's okay to feel a range of emotions and that you are there to listen and support them without judgment.

9. Normalize Their Experiences

Help them understand that it's normal for foster children to have mixed feelings about their past and present situations, especially during emotionally charged times like the holidays.

10. Patience is Key

Be patient and understand that building trust and comfort can take time. The child might not be ready to open up immediately, and that's okay.

Handling sensitive topics and questions with foster children requires a thoughtful, informed, and compassionate approach. The goal is to create a safe space where the child feels respected, heard, and cared for, especially during a time of year that can stir up complex emotions.

Source: <https://www.eohfamilies.org/blog/how-to-navigate-the-holidays-as-a-foster-family>



Prevent a fire in your home

When you think of home security... keep fire safety in mind. Take care of your smoke alarms and clean your clothes dryer, to prevent fires. And, are you aware of what you need to know to protect your family from a 9-volt battery fire?

Smoke Alarms Save Lives!

Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. If there is a fire in your home, smoke spreads fast and you need smoke alarms to give you time to get out. Having a working smoke alarm cuts the chances of dying in a reported fire in half. Almost two-thirds of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.


Here's what you need to know:

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.
- Test your smoke alarms every month.
- When a smoke alarm sounds, get outside and stay outside.
- Replace all smoke alarms in your home every 10 years

Smoke alarms by the numbers

In a four year period, 3/5 home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

9-Volt Battery Safety



9-volt batteries power our smoke alarms, household items and toys. They can be found in most homes, but these batteries can be a fire hazard if not stored safely or disposed of with care.

The problem

- 9-volt batteries can be dangerous. The positive and negative posts are close together. If a metal object touches the two posts of a 9-volt battery, it can cause a short circuit. This can make enough heat to start a fire.
- It is unsafe to store 9-volt batteries in a drawer near paper clips, coins, pens, or other batteries. Do not store common household items such as steel wool, aluminum foil, and keys near 9-volt batteries. If these items touch the two posts, there is a greater risk of a fire starting.
- Weak batteries may have enough charge to cause a fire. Some fires have started in trash when 9-volt batteries were thrown away with other metal items.

Storing 9-volt batteries

- Keep batteries in original packaging until you are ready to use them. If loose, keep the posts covered with masking, duct, or electrical tape. Prevent the posts from coming in contact with metal objects.
- Keep them someplace safe where they won't be tossed around.
- Store batteries standing up.
- 9-volt batteries should not be stored loose in a drawer. Do not store them in containers with other batteries.

Disposal

- 9-volt batteries should not be thrown away with trash. They can come in contact with other batteries or pieces of metal.
- 9-volt batteries can be taken to a collection site for household hazardous waste.

9-Volt Battery STORAGE

Keep batteries in original packaging until you are ready to use them.



Clothes Dryer Safety

Doing laundry is most likely part of your every day routine. But did you know how important taking care of your clothes dryer is to the safety of your home? With a few simple safety tips you can help prevent a clothes dryer fire.

- Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.
- Do not use the dryer without a lint filter.
- Make sure you clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry. Remove lint that has collected around the drum.
- Rigid or flexible metal venting material should be used to sustain proper air flow and drying time.
- Make sure the air exhaust vent pipe is not restricted and the outdoor vent flap will open when the dryer is operating. Once a year, or more often if you notice that it is taking longer than normal for your clothes to dry, clean lint out of the vent pipe or have a dryer lint removal service do it for you.
- Keep dryers in good working order. Gas dryers should be inspected by a qualified professional to make sure that the gas line and connection are intact and free of leaks.
- Make sure the right plug and outlet are used and that the machine is connected properly.
- Follow the manufacturer's operating instructions and don't overload your dryer.
- Turn the dryer off if you leave home or when you go to bed.

Source: NFPA Public Education Division

AND DON'T FORGET...

Dryers should be properly **grounded**.

Check the **outdoor vent** flap to make sure it is not covered by snow.

Keep the area around your dryer **clear** of things that can burn, like boxes, cleaning supplies and clothing, etc.

Clothes that have come in contact with **flammable substances**, like gasoline, paint thinner, or similar solvents should be laid outside to dry, then can be washed and dried as usual.

FACT

The leading cause of home clothes dryer fires is failure to clean them.

HEAD LICE 101



Finding lice is tricky, and it gets missed – and misdiagnosed frequently. With sunlight, or a bright light, and a pair of magnifying glasses or magnifying visor, check the crown of the head and the hotspots. These are in the bangs, around the ears, and on the back (or nape) of the neck. Check the whole head, because frankly, lice could be anywhere. If you find something and you can flick it off, it's probably not a nit. Nits—or lice eggs—are cemented to the hair with the bug's special bond. If you can remove it, tape it on a white piece of paper and examine it.

Lice eggs have colour; they're not white. They're teardrop shaped, brownish, and attached to one side of the hair shaft. They're tiny – but visible. Lice bugs – lice (or in the singular, louse) – are unmistakable. They're about the size of a sesame seed, and light to dark brown in colour.


Don't pull your hair out! Lice is a solvable problem, and there are options:

- The RobiComb® zaps live lice.
- Enzyme Shampoo aids in the removal of lice.
- Oil smothers bugs by clogging up their breathing apparatus.

- Reduction combing with a professional quality nit comb.

There's no guaranteed way to avoid lice, just things you can do to prevent it:

- Avoid head to head contact, including selfies.
- Avoid sharing hair items, including brushes.
- Check regularly.
- Scent hair with specially essential oils for relief.
- Watch for scratching. Notify close friends and the school if you find lice.
- Educate kids about lice.



Home Safety & Carbon Monoxide

As the colder weather starts to settle in, people use fuel-burning appliances more frequently in order to keep themselves warm. People need to be extremely vigilant when using these appliances to prevent deadly exposure to the serious hazards of carbon monoxide(CO).

Carbon monoxide is often called the “silent killer” - its victims cannot see it, smell it or taste it. It is an invisible, odorless gas that can poison, and even kill you. Breathing in carbon monoxide can make you feel sick, and feel as if you have the flu. You may experience headaches, nausea, dizziness and shortness of breath. People most at risk are infants, small children, pregnant women, elderly people, and people with heart or lung problems.

Carbon monoxide gas is produced by the incomplete burning of fuels. It can be released by gas furnaces, hot water heaters, cars, fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene heaters. Faulty burners or clogged chimneys are often part of the problem. To avoid the production of CO, you should have your chimney, furnace and gas fired appliances checked by professional technicians every year.

In Ontario alone, over a seven year period, there had been 74 accidental deaths from asphyxia due to vehicle exhaust and furnace fumes. Just one fire department responded to over 800 calls from people whose CO alarms sounded or who suspected they might have been exposed. In many cases, fire crews found dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.

A carbon monoxide detector is the best way to protect you and your family from this potentially

deadly threat. Install CO alarms where they can be easily heard, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. When installing a CO alarm, always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Test CO alarms at least once a month and replace batteries according to manufacturer's instructions.

To reduce the chances of you or a loved one getting carbon monoxide poisoning, follow these tips:

- Eliminate CO at the source. Make the maintenance of your furnace, fireplace, and all fuel-burning appliances an absolute given. Have them checked and cleaned each year.
- Install a certified carbon monoxide alarm in your home and check it regularly to make sure the battery is working.
- Know the symptoms of CO poisoning. If they appear, it is important to get everyone, including pets, outside to fresh air immediately.
- Never heat your home with a gas stove.
- Never use a barbeque, charcoal or hibachi grill in the home or in an enclosed area.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow.
- Never use a gas-powered generator inside your home.

If your CO alarm sounds, make sure to get out of your home immediately and call 911 from a safe place.

Source: www.canadasafetycouncil.org

Ways to occupy kids indoors during the cold spells

ACTIVITIES

- Build a Fort
- Write a Story
- Bake a homemade treat
- Have a Movie Day
- Put on a Fashion Show
- Do Yoga
- Build an Obstacle Course
- Build Something With Lego
- Put on a Puppet Show
- Make a Treasure Hunt
- Make Your Own Indoor Bowling (use paper towel rolls for the pins and a ball to bowl.)
- Put on a Play
- Make Indoor Hopscotch (use masking tape etc, to make your own hopscotch tiles.)



- Do a family chore together
- Have a Dance Party
- Have a Tea Party
- Play with Toys in a bin of Water
- Set up a Play Store (grab a pretend shopping basket and set up the merchandise.)
- Make a Sock Toss Game (use mismatched socks and fill them with beans or rice.)
- Make Bead Art
- Write in a Journal
- Do a craft
- Draw

GAMES

- Play Would You Rather
- Play I Spy
- Play Simon Says
- Play Board Games
- Play Hide and Seek
- Have an indoor scavenger hunt
- Play Bingo
- Play Card Games
- Do a Puzzle
- Play Charades
- Play Freeze Dance
- Play Hot Potato
- Play Marbles
- Play Keep the Balloon Up
- Play Dominoes
- Play Hangman
- Play Tic-Tac-Toe
- Sticky Spider Web (use painter's tape to make a web on a doorway opening. Kids can use scrunched up newspaper balls, balloons or other light weight objects and throw them at the web.)
- Obstacle Maze (using crepe paper, flag tape, or painters tape etc, create a maze in a hallway for your kids to navigate their bodies through. Put the tape high and low, forcing them to step over and crawl under at various points – excellent for strength, body control, precision and more!)

EDUCATIONAL

- Read Books
- Learn Origami
- Learn About a New Animal
- Learn to Sew
- Learn to Knit
- Do Brain Teasers
- Learn a New Language
- Learn About a Country

(Always consider a child's mental and physical ability level before choosing an activity. Keep the activity age appropriate and safe).

Forever in my heart

ALTHOUGH I'M NOT THEIR MOTHER
I CARE FOR THEM EACH DAY,
I CUDDLE, SING AND READ TO THEM
AND WATCH THEM AS THEY PLAY.

I SEE EACH NEW ACCOMPLISHMENT,
I HELP THEM GROW AND LEARN.
I UNDERSTAND THEIR LANGUAGE,
I LISTEN WITH CONCERN.

THEY COME TO ME FOR COMFORT,
AND I KISS AWAY THEIR TEARS.
THEY PROUDLY SHOW THEIR WORK TO ME,
I GIVE THE LOUDEST CHEERS!

NO, I'M NOT THEIR MOTHER,
BUT MY ROLE IS JUST AS STRONG
I NURTURE THEM AND KEEP THEM SAFE,
THOUGH MAYBE NOT FOR LONG.

I KNOW SOMEDAY THE TIME WILL COME,
WHEN WE WILL HAVE TO PART.
BUT I KNOW EACH CHILD I CARED FOR,
IS FOREVER IN MY HEART!

Author Unknown





KEEPING KIDS SAFE & WARM

while Playing Outside in Winter

Heading outside for some wintertime fun like sledding, throwing snowballs or ice skating can be a sure-fire cure for cabin fever. It's also a great way for kids to get the 60 minutes of daily exercise they need. Just be sure your child is dressed right—and know when it's time to come in and warm up. Children exposed to extreme cold for too long and without warm, dry, breathable clothing can get frostbite or even life-threatening hypothermia.

LITTLE BODIES, BIG CHILL

Children are more at risk from the cold than adults. Because their bodies are smaller, they lose heat more quickly. Especially if they're having fun, they may be less likely to come inside when they're getting too cold.

Frostbite

Frostbite happens when the skin, and sometimes the tissue below it, freezes. Fingers, toes, ears, and noses are most likely to get frostbite. Frostbitten skin may start to hurt or feel like it's burning, then quickly go numb. It may turn white or pale gray and form blisters.

What to do:

- If you suspect frostbite, bring your child indoors to gently warm up. Don't rub the affected area, and don't pop any blisters.
- Avoid placing anything hot directly on the skin. Soak frostbitten areas of the body in warm (not hot) water for 20 to 30 minutes. Warm washcloths can be applied to frostbitten noses, ears and lips.
- After a few minutes, dry and cover your child with blankets. Give them something warm to drink.
- If the pain or numbness continues for more than a few minutes, call your pediatrician.

Hypothermia

When the body's temperature drops below normal from the cold, dangerous hypothermia begins to set in. A child may start shivering, a sign the body is trying to warm itself up, but then become sluggish, clumsy, or slur his words.

What to do:

- Hypothermia is a medical emergency, so call 911 right away.
- Until help arrives, bring the child indoors. Remove any

wet clothing, which draws heat away from the body.

- Wrap your child in blankets or warm clothes, and give her something warm to drink. Be sure to cover core body areas like the chest and abdomen.
- If your child stops breathing or loses a pulse, give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or CPR.

PREVENTING FROSTBITE & HYPOTHERMIA

Frostbite and hypothermia are different conditions, but some wintertime planning and safety steps can help protect your child from both:

Check the wind chill

In general, playing outside in temperatures or wind chills below -15° Fahrenheit should be avoided. At these temperatures, exposed skin begins to freeze within minutes.

What to wear

Several thin layers will help keep kids warm and dry. Insulated boots, mittens or gloves, and a hat are essential. Make sure children change out of any wet clothes right away.

Take breaks

Set reasonable limits on the amount of time spent playing outside to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Make sure kids have a place to go for regular indoor breaks to warm up.

TIPS TO STAY SAFE DURING WINTER SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Ice skating

Allow children to skate only on approved surfaces. Check for signs posted by local police or recreation departments, or call your local police department to find out which areas have been approved.

Advise your child to:

- Skate in the same direction as the crowd
- Avoid darting across the ice
- Never skate alone
- Not chew gum or eat candy while skating
- Consider having your child wear a helmet, knee pads and elbow pads, especially while learning to skate to keep them safe.

Sledding

- Keep sledders away from motor vehicles.
- Children should be supervised while sledding.

- Keep young children separated from older children.
- Sledding feet first or sitting up, instead of lying down head-first, may prevent head injuries.
- Consider having your child wear a helmet while sledding.
- Use steerable sleds, not snow disks or inner tubes.
- Sleds should be structurally sound and free of sharp edges and splinters, and the steering mechanism should be well lubricated.
- Sled slopes should be free of obstructions like trees or fences, be covered in snow (not ice), not be too steep, and end with a flat runoff.
- Avoid sledding in crowded areas.

Snow skiing and snowboarding

- Children should be taught to ski or snowboard by a qualified instructor in a program designed for children.
- Never ski or snowboard alone.
- Young children should always be supervised by an adult. Older children's need for adult supervision depends on their maturity and skill. If older children are not with an adult, they should always at least be accompanied by a friend.
- All skiers and snowboarders should wear helmets. Ski facilities should require helmet use, but if they do not, parents should enforce the requirement for their children.
- Equipment should fit the child. Skiers should wear safety bindings that are adjusted at least every year. Snowboarders should wear gloves with built-in wrist guards. Eye protection or goggles should also be used.
- Slopes should fit the ability and experience of the skier or snowboarder. Avoid crowded slopes.
- Avoid skiing in areas with trees and other obstacles.

Snowmobiling

- The AAP recommends that children under age 16 not operate snowmobiles and that children under age 6 never ride on snowmobiles.
- Do not use a snowmobile to pull a sled or skiers.
- Wear goggles and a safety helmet approved for use on motorized vehicles like motorcycles.
- Travel at safe speeds.
- Never snowmobile alone or at night.
- Stay on marked trails, away from roads, water, railroads and pedestrians.

Source: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Winter-Safety.aspx>

Making Food FUN



Chocolate Cherry Mice

INGREDIENTS:

20 chocolate candy kisses, unwrapped
5 ounces chocolate bark or chocolate chips
20 maraschino cherries with the stem attached
40 sliced almonds
Decorating gel

DIRECTIONS:

- Using small bowls, separate everything out for easy access while assembling the mice. You also need a piece of wax paper to place the mice on to dry. It's also helpful to place this on a baking sheet so that you can move it around if needed.
- Place the almond bark or chocolate chips in a medium microwave-safe bowl and microwave for 60 seconds. Remove the bowl from the microwave and stir the chocolate. Repeat in 30-second intervals, stirring in between, until the chocolate is fully melted.
- Dip a cherry in the melted chocolate and allow the excess chocolate to drip off. Carefully place a chocolate kiss at the end of the cherry opposite the stem to create the head. Place the cherry with the kiss on the wax paper to start setting.
- After you have dipped all of the cherries and added the heads, dip the end of a sliced almond in the melted chocolate and then place it at the top of the head to make an ear. Repeat for the second ear. Do this step on all of the mice.
- For the eyes, dab choice of decorating gel for the first eye, then repeat with a second eye and then with all of the mice.
- Allow the mice to set before enjoying. You can also speed up this process in the fridge.

Veggie Christmas Trees

INGREDIENTS:

1 large carrot
1 whole cucumber

DIRECTIONS:

- Peel the carrot, discarding the top and bottom. From the thicker end of the carrot, cut 8 rounds, around ½ cm thick. Using a mini star-shaped cutter, cut a star from each piece of carrot. Divide and cut the remaining piece of carrot into 8 pieces, which will form the trunks of your cucumber trees.
- Using a vegetable peeler, cut long strips from the cucumber, the whole length long. Starting at the smallest end, carefully fold a strip of cucumber back and forth, starting with small folds and getting gradually bigger with each one, until you have created a tree shape. Push the folds together, and push a cocktail stick through to skewer them from top to bottom.
- Push the cocktail stick into one of the carrot pieces, big fold side down. Push a carrot star onto the other end of the cocktail stick. Carefully separate the folds a little so that the cucumber fills the space between the two carrot pieces.
- Stand your edible Christmas tree on a plate or serving tray and repeat until you have made as many cucumber trees as you need and serve immediately.



Christmas Tree Sausage Rolls

INGREDIENTS:

1 roll pizza dough (280 grams)
4 sausages
1 egg
fresh basil leaves
1 yellow pepper

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat your oven to 200°C / 392°F.
- Spread out the rectangular pizza dough. Halve the dough lengthwise, and then cut it into 16 symmetrical rectangles.
- Slice the sausages into pieces that are as wide as the rectangles. Roll the sausage pieces into the strips of pizza dough.
- Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Arrange the rolls standing up on the tray in a Christmas tree shape.
- Brush with a beaten egg. Bake for 15-18 minutes until golden. Allow to cool.
- Scatter basil leaves onto the tree and cut out the yellow pepper star with a cookie cutter. Insert a toothpick into the star and stick it into the top of the tree. Cut out small stars with the mini cutter and top these onto the basil leaves.
- Serve with mustard and ketchup.



for the *Holidays*

Chocolate Dipped Mandarin Oranges

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 oz dark chocolate or milk chocolate
- 4 oz white chocolate
- 6 - 7 mandarin oranges, peeled & segmented
- Coarse or flaked sea salt (optional)
- Multi-color sprinkles (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

- Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Place white chocolate in a microwave safe bowl. Heat in microwave in 20 second intervals, stirring well between intervals until melted and smooth.
- Dip half of the mandarin orange slices in chocolate, dipping halfway, then lift and let excess run off. Sprinkle with sprinkles or sea salt if desired.
- Transfer baking sheets to refrigerator and chill just until set. Serve immediately for best results.



Grinch Fruit Sticks

INGREDIENTS:

- 30 green grapes
- 2 bananas
- 30 strawberries
- 20 mini marshmallows

DIRECTIONS:

Cut the tops of your grapes and the tops off your strawberries. Place each grape on the end of each skewer. Slide down a slice of banana on top of each grape. Place a strawberry on each toothpick on top of the banana slice. Lastly, add a mini marshmallow to the top of your tooth pick.

Festive Hummus Wreath

INGREDIENTS:

- Hummus
- Feta crumbles
- Green onions
- Parsley
- Olive oil
- Cherry tomatoes
- Red Bell Pepper

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine hummus with a bit of crumbled feta and green onions in a bowl.
- To assemble, place a small bowl in the center of cake plate. Spread the hummus around the bowl in a circle.
- Next, finely chop the fresh parsley and combine with a teaspoon of olive oil and salt to taste. Spread the green mixture on top of the hummus. Cut cherry tomatoes in half, and use as ornaments with leftover crumbled feta as snow.
- Use a small bow-shaped metal cookie cutter to make a bow from the sidewall of a large red pepper (or you may try "freestyle" cutting one).
- Remove bowl from center and put crackers in its place.



Reindeer Chow

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cup Chex cereal
- 1 cup pretzels
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup semi sweet chocolate chips
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup Christmas M&M's
- 1 cup Mini Oreos

DIRECTIONS:

- Melt the chocolate chips and peanut butter in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second increments, stirring in between every time. Stir in the vanilla until combined.
- Add in the Chex cereal and pretzels, then gently fold until they are all coated in the chocolate peanut butter mixture.
- In large bag, add in $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount of powdered sugar, top it with the Chex and pretzel mix, then add in the rest of the powdered sugar. Close the bag and shake to coat.
- Transfer the mixture onto a parchment or wax paper lined baking sheet and let it set and cool for 30 minutes. Mix in the M&M's and the Mini Oreos and enjoy or store in an airtight container.



Merry
Christmas

& HAPPY NEW YEAR