

# COLD WEATHER SAFETY FOR OLDER ADULTS



ACTIVITY BOOK

# This activity book was created by the Public Health Preparedness Program at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

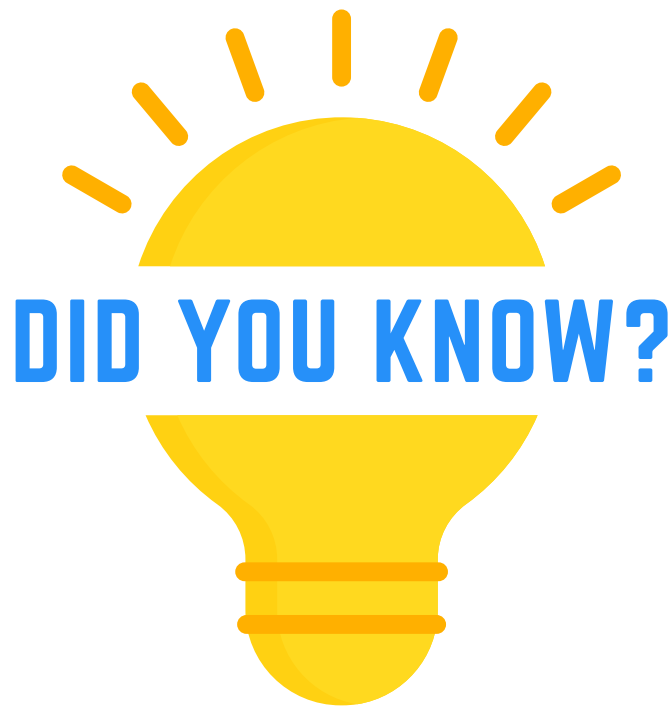
We help communities prepare for public health emergencies, like:

- Severe storms and flooding
- Extreme cold
- Infectious disease outbreaks, such as COVID-19, seasonal flu, RSV and Hepatitis A

Write down what you feel most  
prepared for:

## Sign up for Ready Philadelphia: text "ReadyPhila" to 888-777

- Receive free text messages on emergencies or severe weather.
- Alerts are available in eleven languages: English, French, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Swahili, and American Sign Language.
- Be the first to know, then share important information with family and neighbors.



**By 2040, the number of older adults in the U.S.A. is expected to reach 80.8 million!**

*Let's try our best to stay healthy throughout the year!*

This activity book will provide important health information to keep you safe and healthy during the winter.

## **We will learn about:**

- **Hypothermia**
- **Carbon monoxide poisoning**
- **Illness, medicines, and cold weather**
- **Mental health and well-being**

*The Answer Key starts on Page 28.*

# What Is Hypothermia?

- Hypothermia happens when your body temperature gets very low.
- Changes in your body that come with aging can make it harder for older adults to be aware of getting cold.
- In extreme situations, a dangerously low body temperature can cause other health problems, such as a [heart attack](#), [kidney problems](#), or [liver damage](#).
- Being outside in the cold, or even being in a very cold house, can lead to hypothermia.
- Do not let it get too cold inside and dress warmly.

## Wearing a hat can help keep you warm.

Color in this hat with your favorite colors!

Do you have a hat or scarf to wear when it's cold?

YES

NO



# What are the warning signs of Hypothermia?

- Sometimes it is hard to tell if a person has hypothermia.
- Look for clues.
  - Is their home very cold?
  - Is the person not dressed for cold weather?
- Watch for the signs of hypothermia in yourself, too. You might become confused if your body temperature gets very low.
- Don't wait until you get very cold to reach out for help. Talk to your family and friends about ideas to stay warm this winter.

## Early signs of hypothermia:

- Shivering
- Exhaustion or feeling very tired
- Confusion
- Fumbling hands
- Memory loss
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness



**CALL FOR HELP AND GET WARM!**

# What Are The Severe Signs of Hypothermia?

- Moving slowly, trouble walking, or being clumsy
- Stiff and jerky arm or leg movements
- Slow heartbeat
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Blacking out or losing consciousness



**Call 9-1-1 right away if you think someone has warning signs of hypothermia.**



# Hypothermia

## What to do after you call 9-1-1

- Try to move the person to a warmer place.
- Wrap the person in a warm blanket, towels, or coats—whatever is handy. Even your own body warmth will help.
- Give the person something warm to drink, but avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine, such as regular coffee. Do not give an unconscious person anything to eat or drink because they could choke.
- Do not rub the person's legs or arms.
- Do not try to warm the person in a bath.
- Do not use a heating pad.
- Call 911 again if the person's condition gets worse.



### TRUE OR FALSE?

Write "T" for true or "F" for false next to each sentence.  
*You can check your answers on page 28.*

1. You can help someone get warm by placing them in a warm bath.
2. If you are cold and can't get warm, you should call someone for help or call 911 if needed.
3. You can give the person a cup of regular coffee to help them get warm.

# Tips for Keeping Warm While You're Inside

- **Set your heat to at least 68–70°F.** To save on heating bills, place a rolled towel in front of all doors to keep out drafts. Close the vents and shut the doors to the basement and in rooms you are not using. Make sure nothing is blocking radiators, heaters or vents and change filters.
- **Make sure your house isn't losing heat through windows.** Keep your blinds and curtains closed. If you have gaps around the windows, try to keep the cold air out using caulk, weather stripping or even rice or dried beans inside a sock or pillowcase. Use insulating plastic on your windows.
- **Dress warmly on cold days even if you are staying in the house.** Throw a blanket over your legs. Wear socks and slippers. Get up and move around to warm up.

**The Energy Coordinating Agency provides weatherization services for free to income eligible residents!**

A trained professional will evaluate your home to determine where energy can be saved.

**Call 215-609-1000.**





# Tips for Keeping Warm While You're Inside

- **When you go to sleep use extra covers.** You can also wear a hat.
- **Limit how much alcohol you drink.** Alcohol can make you lose body heat.
- **Ask family or friends to check on you during cold weather.** If a power outage leaves you without heat, stay with a relative or friend.



# Utility Assistance

Utility assistance and other programs help you manage bills, afford necessities, and lower the chance of health and safety challenges during extreme weather events.



## Utility Emergency Services Fund (UESF)

Income-based programs stabilizing homes for families facing a housing crisis. Case Management – Financial Assistance – Educational Workshops and more.

**215-814-6845 – [BAC@uesfacts.org](mailto:BAC@uesfacts.org) – [www.uesfacts.org](http://www.uesfacts.org)**

## Philadelphia Corporation for the Aging (PCA)

Assistance for low-income seniors and caregivers.

**Helpline: 215-765-9040 — [www.pcacares.org/contact-us/](http://www.pcacares.org/contact-us/)**

## BenePhilly

BenePhilly offers non-income-based resources and free one-on-one support to help Philadelphians like you enroll in benefits to help you afford costs such as:

- Prescription Drugs
- Health Insurance
- Groceries
- Childcare Assistance
- Heat & other utilities
- Property Taxes
- Disability Benefits

**BenePhilly Hotline: 844-848-4376**

It can't hurt to reach out and see if there are new programs you may be eligible for!

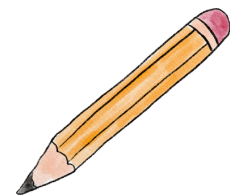


It may be helpful to write down some questions before calling PCA and/or UESF.

Here are some examples:

- Which services do you offer and how do I qualify?
- What information do I need to apply?
- Do I need internet access to complete the application process?

Use the space below to write down any questions you have.

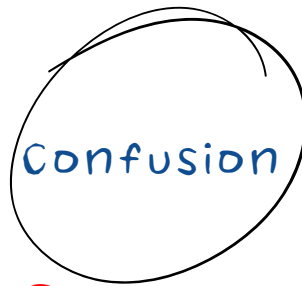
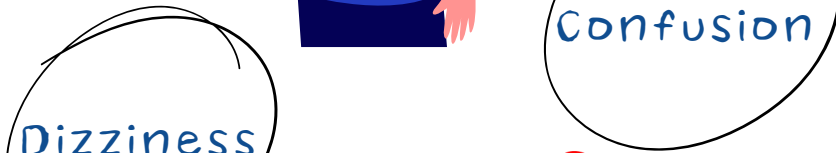
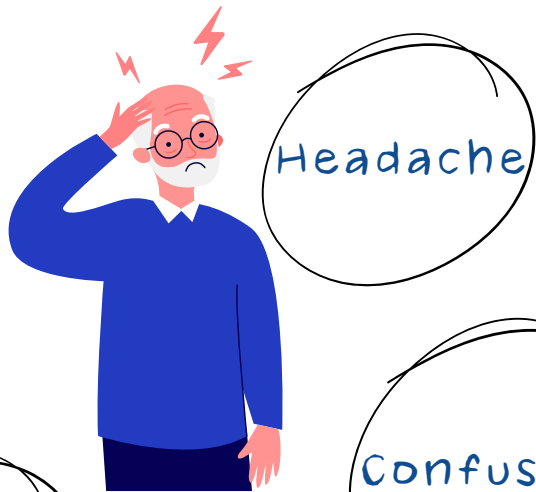
A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue border. Along the top edge, there are six circular rings representing a spiral binding. The interior of the box is blank, intended for the user to write down their questions.

# Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

**Carbon monoxide is odorless, tasteless, colorless—and toxic.**

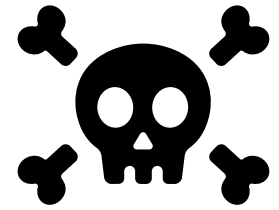
- Many household items including gas- and oil-burning furnaces, portable generators, and charcoal grills produce this carbon monoxide.
- Carbon monoxide can build up indoors and can poison people and animals who breathe it.

**Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include:**



# Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

In severe cases, carbon monoxide poisoning can be **fatal** within minutes.



- Children, pregnant women, older adults, and those with chronic illness may be affected more severely and rapidly.
- People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from carbon monoxide poisoning before they ever become aware of their symptoms.

**This is why it is so important to install carbon monoxide monitors in your home and make sure all monitors have working batteries.**



## **IF YOU THINK THERE IS CARBON MONOXIDE IN YOUR HOME:**

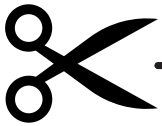
- **Go outside into fresh air immediately**
- **Call 911**
- **Do not go back in the home until firefighters, who can determine whether there's a hazard, have told you it's safe.**



# Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

**Cut along the dotted line below and put this important information on your refrigerator.**

It is safe to cut along the dotted line, you will not lose any information on the other page.



**If you have any symptoms or you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get outside immediately and call 911 or the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.**

# Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) Safety

- Install Smoke & CO Detectors. Ensure batteries work.
- Do not use gas ovens to heat your home.
- Never block CO detectors or smoke alarms and do not disable them.



Where can I get detectors?

- **Free Smoke Detectors:** Visit [bit.ly/RedCrossSmokeAlarm](https://bit.ly/RedCrossSmokeAlarm), call 3-1-1, or visit [bit.ly/PHL311](https://bit.ly/PHL311).
- **Free CO Detectors:** call 3-1-1 to check for availability.

Landlords are required to provide and maintain smoke alarms and must provide or fix CO detectors for new tenants.

**For more information, visit [bit.ly/COPHL](https://bit.ly/COPHL) or [bit.ly/PHLFire](https://bit.ly/PHLFire).**

# Bundle Up on Windy, Cold Days

- A heavy wind can quickly lower your body temperature.
- Check the weather forecast for windy and cold days.
- If you have to go out, wear warm clothes, and don't stay out in the cold and wind for a long time.



## Here are some other tips:

- Wear loose layers of clothing. The air between the layers helps to keep you warm.
- Put on a hat and scarf. You lose a lot of body heat when your head and neck are uncovered.
- Wear a waterproof coat or jacket if it's snowy or rainy.
- Change your clothes right away if they get damp or wet.
- Wear thin, synthetic, non-cotton layers close to your skin with wool and thicker clothing on top.

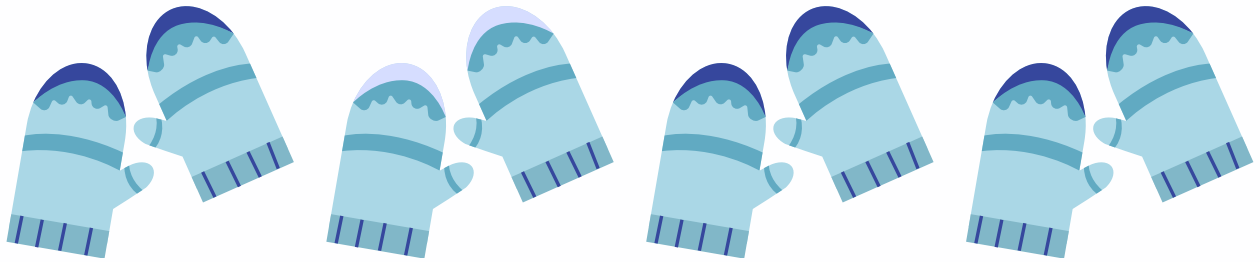
How do you check the weather before going outside?





# FIND THE DIFFERENCE

Circle the differences below.



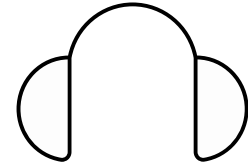
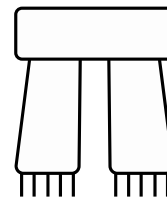
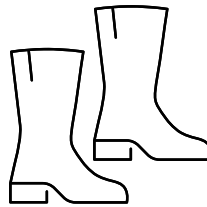
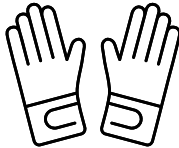
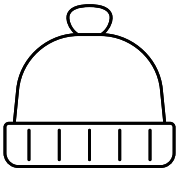
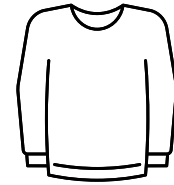
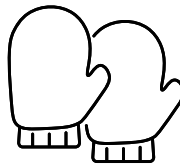
# WINTER CLOTHES



## WORD SCRAMBLE



### Clues



### Unscramble the words below

sfaerufm

kscos

nimtset

taco

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resawet

eebnia

vesgol

ostob

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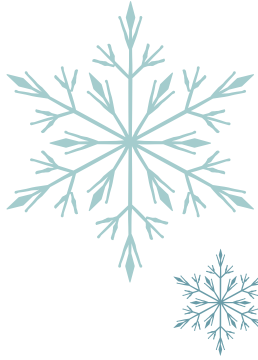
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frcas

odhioe

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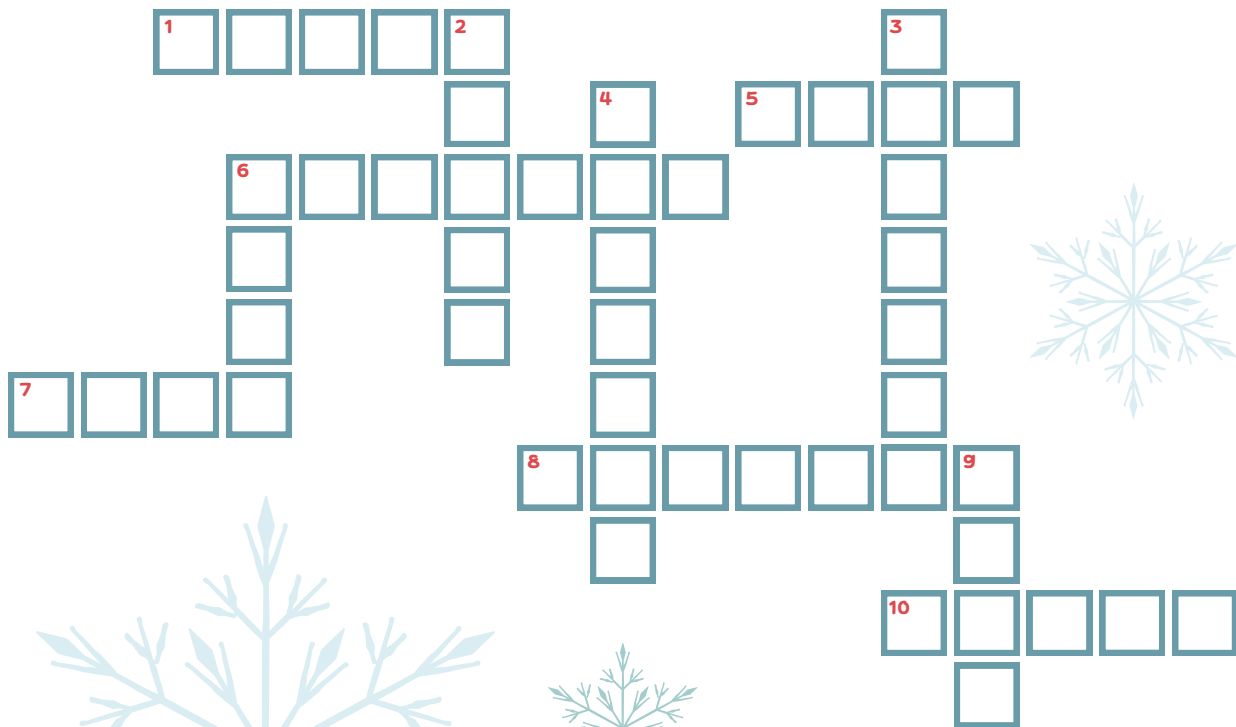


# WINTER

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Read the clues below and fill in the grid.



### ACROSS

1. Shoes for snowy or rainy days.
5. A type of tree that stays green.
6. Warm clothing for the upper body.
7. The opposite of warm.
8. Warm gloves for hands.
10. Related to very cold regions.

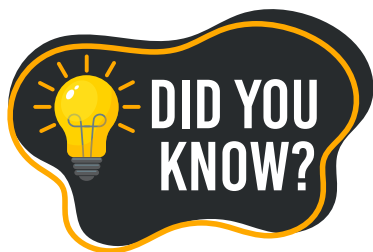
### DOWN

2. Cloth worn around the neck.
3. A figure made by stacking snowballs.
4. A black-and-white bird that can't fly.
6. A small vehicle for sliding on snow.
9. Frozen water that falls from the sky.

# Illness, Medicines, and Cold Weather

**Some illnesses may make it harder for your body to stay warm.**

- **Thyroid problems** can make it hard to maintain a normal body temperature.
- **Diabetes** can prevent blood from flowing normally to provide warmth.
- **Parkinson's disease and arthritis** can make it hard to put on clothes, or use zippers and buttons, use a blanket, or get out of the cold.
- **Memory loss** can cause a person to go outside without the right clothing.



- Taking some medicines and not being active also can affect body heat.
- These include medicines you get from your doctor and those you buy over-the-counter.



Ask your doctor if the medicines you take affect body heat.

Always talk with your doctor before you stop taking any medication.

# Illness, Medicines, and Cold Weather

## Instructions for this page:

- Cut this page out and take this to your next medical visit.
- Take notes and ask any questions you may have.

**It is safe to cut this page out, you will not lose any information on the other page.**

**Here are some topics to talk about with your doctor to stay safe in cold weather:**

N O T E S

DATE .....

Do I have any health conditions that make it harder for me to stay warm in cold weather?

If so, what are they?

How can I prevent hypothermia?

How can I stay active when it's cold outside?

# Older Adults and Mental Health

As we age, we may experience life changes that impact our mental health, such as coping with a serious illness or losing a loved one.

- We may feel grief, social isolation, or loneliness.
- We all have these feelings, and they are normal, but when these feelings persist, they can lead to depression and anxiety.

Have you ever felt grief or loneliness?

Use the space below to describe how it made you feel.

Think about things you did to feel better. Don't forget about your support network!

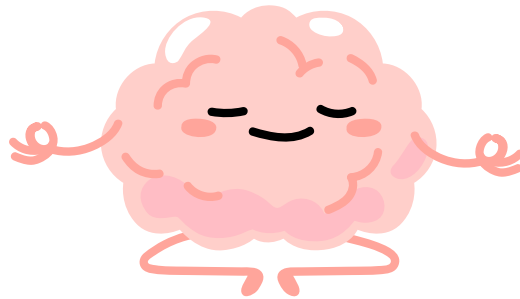


# Today I feel...



**Circle the way you feel. You can circle more than one.**

- Happy    Sad    Angry    Nervous    Excited    Tired  
Worried    Focused    Confused    Joyful    Confident    Upset



**Write down why you feel this way today.**

## Today I feel this way because...



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# Self-Reflection Journal Page

What is one thing you are most grateful for today?

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What is your biggest highlight from today?

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What was one challenge you experienced today?

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What is one thing you learned from that challenge?

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What is one goal you want to accomplish tomorrow?

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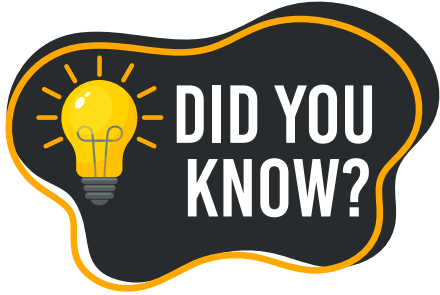
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You can reflect on these questions every day or anytime you want to.





# Older Adults and Mental Health



**More than 1 out of every 6 adults in Philadelphia has been diagnosed with a mental health condition.**

**Many more are not diagnosed and suffering without support systems that are available.**

**HELP IS AVAILABLE.**

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
Mental Health Warm-line**

**267-687-4381**

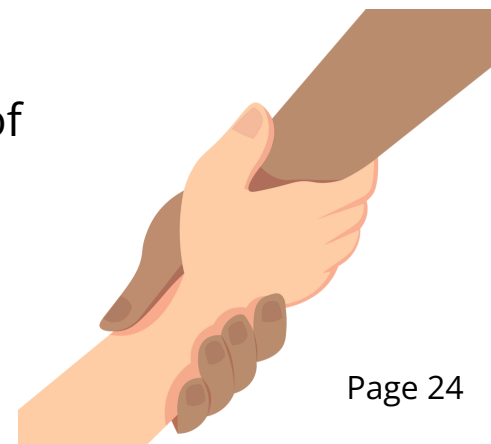
The NAMI warmline is a peer-run phone line that offers callers emotional support.

**PLEASE SHARE THIS RESOURCE WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES.**

**Reducing mental health stigma is crucial** for creating a more inclusive and supportive society that allows people to seek help, access appropriate treatment, and lead fulfilling lives.

## **Helpful ways to reduce stigma:**

- Educate yourself on mental health conditions, available resources, and the lived experiences of those around you.
- Walk the walk every day by caring for your own mental health, and helping others do the same.



# Older Adults and Mental Health

## 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

**Send a text to 988 (FREE)**

Open 24/7

**For TTY Users:** Use a relay service or dial 711 then 988.

### Call for help with:

- Thoughts of suicide
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Thoughts of wanting to harm yourself or others
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Stress

### Support is available in:

- Spanish
- French
- Russian
- Mandarin
- Vietnamese



# Ways to Stay Connected

Our office helps communities prepare for and respond to public health emergencies in Philadelphia.

**Learn more and stay in touch with us!**

Visit our website at [bit.ly/PDPHPreparednessOutreach](https://bit.ly/PDPHPreparednessOutreach).



## Please reach out to us if you are interested in:

- In-person or virtual trainings. Interpretation can be provided.
- Tabling at community events.
- Participation or presentations at community meetings.
- Public health preparedness guidance tailored to specific groups of people.

## We offer a seasonal schedule that includes all hazards public health preparedness and other emergent topics in addition to the following:

- Summer: Heat emergencies and utility assistance
- Fall: Respiratory illness like COVID-19, Seasonal Flu and Preparedness month
- Winter: Severe storms and utility assistance
- Spring: Flooding, Mosquitos, and Tick-borne illness

**We would  
love to hear  
from you!**

For printed copies of our educational materials or questions, email us at [\*\*PublicHealthPreparedness@phila.gov\*\*](mailto:PublicHealthPreparedness@phila.gov) or leave a message at **215-429-3016**.

To receive free text alerts to your phone about emergencies or severe weather, text ReadyPhila to 888-777.



# 4 Ways to Stay Healthy All Year

**Wash your hands often.**



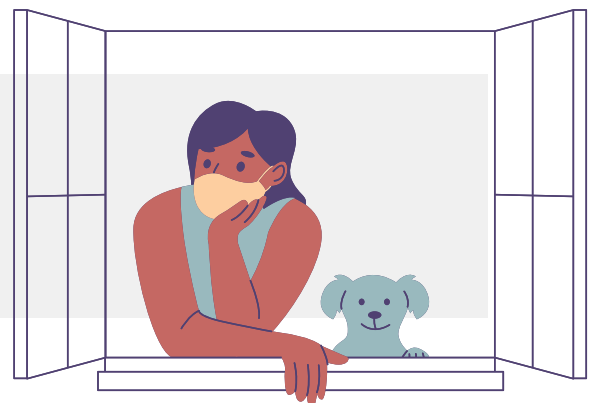
**Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose & mouth with unwashed hands.**



**Cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze!**



**Stay home if you are sick**



# Answer Key

## Page 6. True or False

FALSE

1. You can help someone get warm by placing them in a warm bath.

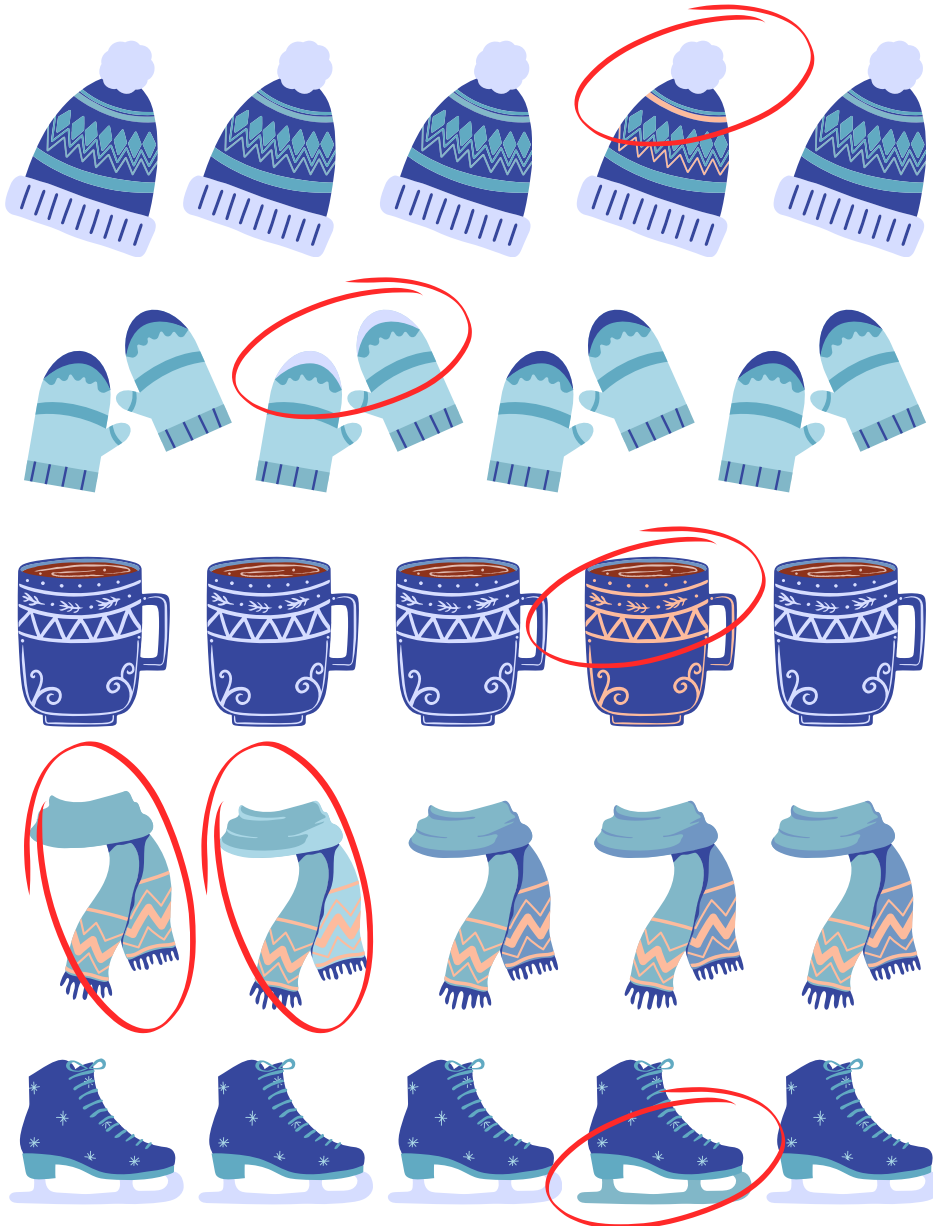
TRUE

2. If you are cold and can't get warm, you should call someone for help or call 911 if needed.

FALSE

3. You can give the person a cup of regular coffee to help them get warm.

## Page 17. Find the Difference



# Answer Key

## Page 18. Word Unscramble

sfæru<sup>f</sup>m  
earmuffs

kscos  
socks

nimtset  
mittens

taco  
coat

resawet  
sweater

eebnia  
beanie

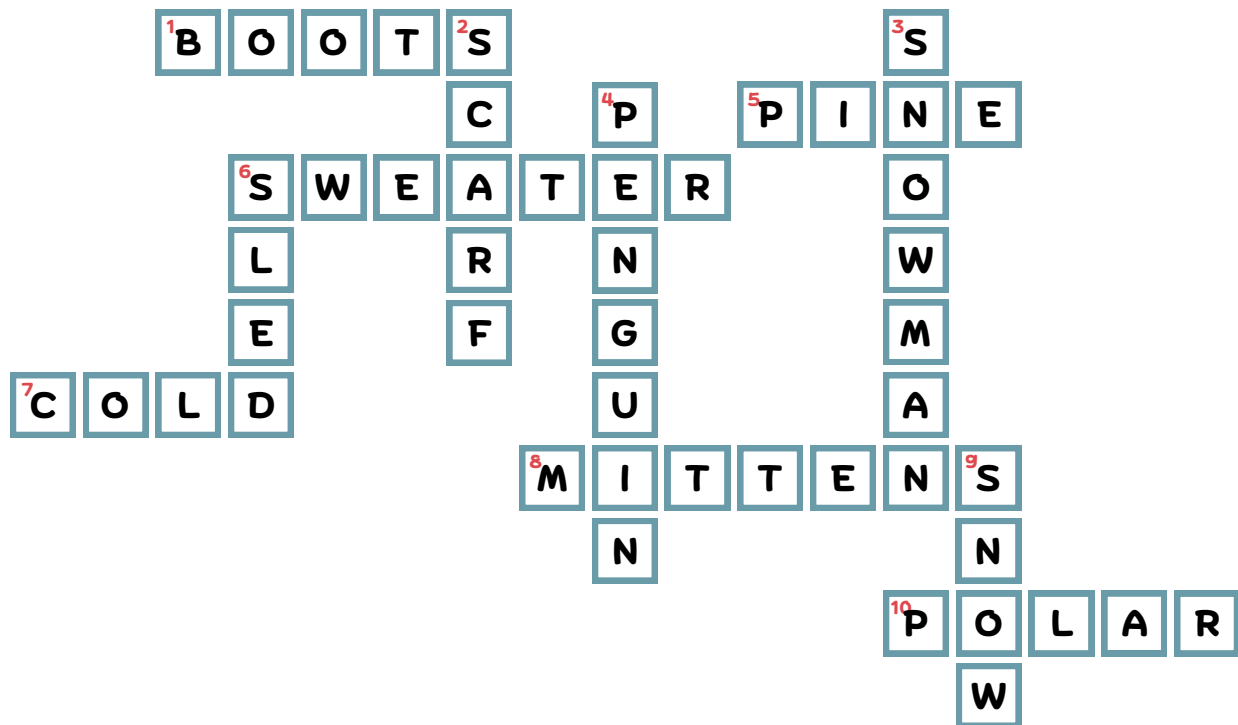
vesgol  
gloves


ostob  
boots

frcas  
scarf

odhioe  
hoodie

## Page 19. Crossword





We hope you learned a lot of important health information to help keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy during the winter.

**Would you like to order FREE copies of this book for your neighbors and loved ones?**

We can mail educational materials, or you can pick them up from our office in Center City, Philadelphia.

To order this activity book and our other materials, please visit

**ORDER NOW**



<https://bit.ly/PHPMaterials> or

leave us a message at **215 429 3016**



**Don't forget to sign up for Ready Philadelphia:**

**Text the words "ReadyPhila" to 888-777**

- Receive free text messages on emergencies or severe weather.
- Alerts are available in eleven languages: English, French, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Swahili, and American Sign Language.
- Be the first to know, then share important information with family and neighbors.