



HEART HEALTH GUIDE

Impact of Cold Weather on the Heart

Cold weather can put an additional strain on your heart, especially if you engage in some of the more strenuous winter activities. Here's how to keep your heart healthy when the temperature drops.

HOW DOES COLD WEATHER AFFECT YOUR HEART?

- Many studies have shown that heart attack rates specifically spike during winter. In fact, a study by the National Registry of Myocardial Infarction found that 53 percent more heart attack cases were reported in winter as opposed to summer.
- A more recent European study supported these findings as well and reported that the average number of heart attacks per day was significantly higher in lower temperatures compared to higher temperatures.
- These statistics make sense because of how the heart works to pump blood through the body. When people spend a prolonged time in the cold, their blood vessels constrict which forces water to leave circulation. This causes the blood to thicken which makes it more likely to clot, increasing heart attack risk.
- Constricting blood vessels can also increase blood pressure and pulse, adding extra strain to the heart as it attempts to pump blood to other vital organs.
- Since your heart has to pump harder to circulate blood in the cold, any additional spike in blood pressure can be especially detrimental. Overexertion from outdoor activities can lead to unstable chest pain, heart attack or stroke.



WHAT POPULATIONS ARE AT MOST RISK?

The populations most vulnerable to heart-related complications from cold temperatures are:

People who already suffer from heart disease

Children

Elderly: They may have a diminished ability to maintain normal internal body temperature—making hypothermia a very real danger as they may be unaware of just how cold it is outside.

WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM THE COLD?

At Heart Rhythm Consultants, we encourage people to take cold weather seriously when it comes to heart health – especially for those more susceptible to its negative effects.

Stay Indoors / Bundle Up: Per the American Heart Association, wind is especially dangerous, because it removes the layer of heated air from around your body. At 30 degrees Fahrenheit in a 30-mile per hour wind, the cooling effect is equal to 15 degrees Fahrenheit.

Avoid Exercising Outside: Do your best to workout using indoor machines instead of outdoor routines. With your heart potentially under more strain because of the cold, overexertion can be very dangerous especially for those not accustomed to this type of weather.

Limit Alcohol Intake: Alcohol can increase a person's feeling of warmth, which in turn may cause them to underestimate the intensity of cold their body is experiencing.



CONTACT HEART RHYTHM CONSULTANTS, P.A.

If you or a loved one are living with a heart rhythm disorder such as atrial fibrillation, contact Heart Rhythm Consultants, P.A. Our team of EP doctors has been serving patients in Sarasota and surrounding cities including Port Charlotte, Venice, Tampa, and Sun City Center for over a decade.