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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS WARM ADVICE ABOUT THE BITTER COLD**

As temperatures plummet again, the Westchester County Department of Health warned residents to take precautions against hypothermia and frostbite.

“Heating bills can prove costly, but if you choose to save money by turning down the thermostat, keep in mind that low temperatures can be dangerous, putting senior citizens, infants and people who are ill at an increased risk for hypothermia,” stated Westchester County Health Commissioner, Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H.

Dr. Lipsman strongly urged residents of households with elderly occupants over 65 to keep the thermostat set at no less than 68 degrees in the daytime. “The problem with low household temperatures is that older and ailing persons are particularly susceptible to accidental hypothermia, a life-threatening condition that causes the body temperature to drop.”

Accidental hypothermia can occur even with temperatures of 60 to 65 degrees. Infants less than one year

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of age should never sleep in a cold room and should be provided with warm clothing and a blanket to prevent loss of body heat.

Warning signs of hypothermia in adults include shivering, confusion, memory loss, drowsiness, exhaustion and slurred speech. Infants who are suffering from hypothermia may appear to have very low energy and bright red, cold skin.

“If you know of an elderly or ailing person who lives alone, be sure to check on him or her every day,” Dr. Lipsman continued.

Frostbite is another cold weather concern, and is especially dangerous because it often happens with little warning. Numbness can occur so quickly that the individual, unaware of being frostbitten, may remain outside, increasing the chance of permanent damage. Older persons, and those with diabetes, are especially vulnerable to frostbite because of impaired circulation.

To prevent frostbite and hypothermia, it is important to dress warmly in windproof clothing and to go indoors when you begin to feel cold. Wear several layers of loose-fitting clothing to trap body heat. Fasten buttons or zippers and tighten drawstrings securely. Don't forget gloves, mittens and a hat that covers the ears.

“Since snow is expected tonight and tomorrow,” Dr. Lipsman added, “remember that cold weather puts an extra burden on the heart. If you have cardiac problems or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling.”

If you suspect that someone is suffering from hypothermia or frostbite, call a medical provider immediately.

For more information on hypothermia and frostbite, contact the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit our website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).