

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Stay safe on the ice this spring

As temperatures rise, many Albertans are eager to return outdoors after a long winter at home. Yet with spring in the air, it's important to know how changing ice conditions can impact your safety.

Whether you spent most of your winter indoors or you picked up a new sport to get outside, such as skating, snowshoeing or cross country-skiing, you may have only experienced ice at its thickest and safest. Warmer weather means that ice becomes thinner, less stable and can be far more dangerous.

A lake or river that appears frozen-solid may not be. If you're going to be on ice, it should be at least 15 to 25 cm thick. However, that sort of measurement can be impossible to judge with a naked eye. An easier way to get a sense of the ice's strength is by looking at the colour. Clear blue ice is strongest, while white is half as strong as blue. Grey ice, which indicates the presence of water, is unsafe and should always be avoided: If it's grey, stay away.

Rivers and stormwater lakes and ponds are ice surfaces you should always stay away from as water is continuously flowing beneath the surface year round.

Below are a few key tips to help you stay safe around ice this spring:

- While ice thickness is important, it's not the only factor in safety. Your best course of action is to check with local authorities for information. This can often be done online or by checking the signs on or near the ice.
- Use the buddy system, don't walk on ice when you are alone.
- Teach your child to call for help loudly and clearly if in trouble.
- Make sure a responsible adult is watching your child if they are on the ice.

If the ice cracks:

- Call 911 for help.
- Lay down on the ice.
- Crawl or roll back to land.
- If a person is in trouble, push or throw something they can use to get out of the water, or float on, until expert help arrives. If you try to rescue someone from the ice, you can put yourself at risk.