

LICKING FLAGPOLES AND OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T DO IN THE WINTER



Licking a metal pole is a foolish idea at *any* time of the year. But it's particularly dangerous in the winter. Your warm, wet tongue will become frozen to the cold metal. Every year, it seems, some kid decides to see whether that's true. And it is. But if you do find yourself in the ridiculous position of having your tongue stuck to a pole, don't panic and don't try to pull it off. Cup your hands around your mouth and gently breathe on the metal to melt the ice and release your tongue.

Here are five more things you **shouldn't do** in the winter!

1. **Put fashion before function.** Dress for the weather, including a hat. If your head gets cold, your body's core temperature drops quickly. That's because you don't shiver if only your head is cold. And shivering is one of the body's techniques for keeping warm. Because there are lots of blood vessels on the scalp, the blood gets cold and passes through the rest of your body. So it's a good idea to cover your head warmly – and the rest of your body as well.
2. **Eat yellow snow.** That's pretty obvious! But some scientists say that even white snow can be full of invisible pollution from the atmosphere, especially in cities. However, most experts say it's not usually dangerous to scoop up a mouthful of soft, fluffy white stuff. Just avoid snow that has recently been plowed or is near pollutants.
3. **Forget your sunscreen.** The sun's ultraviolet rays can still be harmful, even when it's cold. Snow reflects up to 80% of the sun's rays, so you could be getting extra UV radiation.
4. **Rub frostbitten fingers.** If your fingers (or toes or ears) start to feel numb with cold, don't rub them! This can damage the tissue because you can't feel it. Instead, just wiggle your fingers and toes, or cover your ears gently with warm hands.
5. **Stay indoors until it warms up.** It's a myth that getting cold makes you sick. Actually, as we've learned from the COVID pandemic, viruses spread much more quickly in poorly ventilated rooms than in the fresh air. So if you have a mild snuffle, go outside to clear your head.

So grab some warm clothes and a hat, spread some sunscreen on your face and head out into that snow. Just don't put your tongue on a flagpole!

