

Frostbite and Hypothermia Awareness:

Frostbite: Frostbite is the freezing of skin and extremities on the body. The nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes (your extremities) are most commonly affected. Everyone is susceptible, even people who have been living in cold climates for most of their lives.

- **Signals of frostbite:**

- In superficial frostbite, burning, numbness, tingling, [itching](#), or cold sensations in the affected areas. The regions appear white and frozen, is cold to the touch, or is discolored (flushed, white or gray, yellow or blue).
- In deep frostbite, there is an initial decrease in sensation that is eventually completely lost. Swelling and blood-filled blisters are noted over white or yellowish skin that looks waxy and turns a purplish blue as it rewarms. The area is hard, has no resistance when pressed on, and may even appear blackened and dead.

- **What to do for frostbite:**

- Get the person to a warm place – a building, shelter or warm vehicle, as soon as possible and then seek immediate medical help or call 9-1-1.
- Softly handle or warm the area gently; never rub the affected area.
- Gently warm up by *slowly* soaking the affected area in luke warm water (100–105 degrees F) until it appears red and feels warm. Do not expose directly or close to a fire.
- Loosely bandage the area with dry, sterile dressings.
- If the person's fingers or toes are frostbitten, place dry, sterile gauze between them to keep them separated.
- Avoid breaking any blisters.
- Do not allow the affected area to refreeze.

Hypothermia: In very cold weather, a person's body can lose heat faster than they can produce it. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. It can make a person sleepy, confused and clumsy. Because it happens gradually and affects one's thinking and may not be immediately recognized. That makes it especially dangerous. A body temperature below 95° F is a medical emergency and can lead to death if not treated promptly.

Anyone who spends much time outdoors in cold weather can get hypothermia. One can also get it from being cold and wet, or in cold water for too long. Babies and elderly people are especially at risk. Babies can get it just from sleeping exposed in a cold room.

- **Signals of hypothermia include:** shivering, numbness, glassy stare; apathy, weakness, impaired judgment, incoherent speech; loss of consciousness.

- **What to do for hypothermia:**
 - Get the person to a warm place – a building, shelter or warm vehicle, as soon as possible and then seek immediate medical help or call 9-1-1.
 - Remove any wet clothing and dry the person.
 - Warm the person *slowly* by wrapping in blankets or by putting dry clothing on the person. Hot water bottles and chemical hot packs may be used when first wrapped in a towel or blanket before applying. Use your own body as a heat source if necessary.
 - *Do not* warm the person too quickly, such as by immersing him or her in warm water or close exposure to a fire. Rapid warming may cause dangerous heart arrhythmias. Warm the core first (trunk, abdomen), **not** the extremities (hands, feet). This is important to mention because most people will try to warm hands and feet first and that can cause shock
 - Monitor breathing and circulation.
 - Give rescue breathing and CPR if needed.