



Cold Weather Safety: Prevent Hypothermia and Frostbite

HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it, causing core body temperature to fall below safe levels. This is a medical emergency. [CDC](#)

Signs and Symptoms

- Notable shivering
- Confusion, memory loss, or disorientation
- Slurred Speech
- Fatigue or Weakness
- Loss of coordination or clumsiness
- Exhaustion or drowsiness
- In severe cases, shivering stops

**Hypothermia can occur in very cold weather- or even above 40°F if a person is wet and chilled. It is defined as a body temperature below 95°F. [Preventing Hypothermia](#)*

FROSTBITE

Frostbite is an injury caused by freezing of the skin and underlying tissues. It usually affects extremities such as fingers, toes, nose, ears, cheeks, and chin. [CDC](#)

Warning Signs

- Skin turns white, grayish-yellow, or waxy
- Affected area feels numb or unusually firm
- Tingling or stinging sensation
- Loss of sensation in fingers, toes, or face
- Itchy, burning, and blistering

**Frostbite can develop in as little as 5-10 minutes in extreme cold. Frozen skin becomes numb, so a person may not realize frostbite is occurring. [Wind Chill](#) | [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)*

Who is at risk?

People who are at risk for Hypothermia and Frostbite include but are not limited to:

- People with chronic health problems such as but not limited to diabetes, hypertension and heart disease
- People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) or Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)
- People with inadequate clothing or heating
- Older adults
- People who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs
- People who smoke
- People with limited ability to sense cold or communicate discomfort

How to keep people safe in Extreme Cold

- Check local weather forecasts. Know the alerts and wind-chill advisories or warnings.
- Stay indoors in a warm area.
- Increase fluid intake if not contraindicated.
- Put on multiple layers of loose, warm clothing.
- Cover all exposed skin- hats, scarves, mittens and waterproof boots help.
- Limit time outdoors in extreme cold or wind-chill conditions.
- Accompany people outside whenever and wherever possible.
- Frequently monitor people you support by checking on them regularly.

What to do

If you suspect Hypothermia

- Move the person to a warm location.
- Remove wet clothing/cold footwear.
- Cover with blankets.
- Give warm drink if conscious.
- Call 911 immediately.

If you Suspect Frostbite

- Get out of the cold and protect affected area.
- Do not rub or massage frostbitten skin.
- Call 911 immediately.

For more information: [CDC-Winter Weather](#) and [Extreme Cold Safety Tips](#)