

Hypothermia

Signs and Symptoms (from least to most severe)

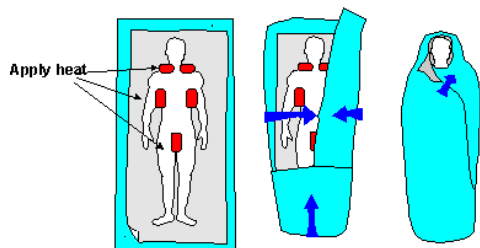
- Shivering
- Blue skin/lips
- Lack of coordination and stumbling while walking
- Slurred speech or mumbling
- Confusion, difficulty thinking and poor decision making
- Drowsiness and low energy levels
- Irrational behaviour and mood swings
- Lack of concern about one's condition
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Loss of consciousness, whether momentary or complete
- Weak pulse

Remember, as time goes on, the person will stop shivering and complaining about being cold-- this is when hypothermia is the most severe and you should seek help immediately.

Treatment

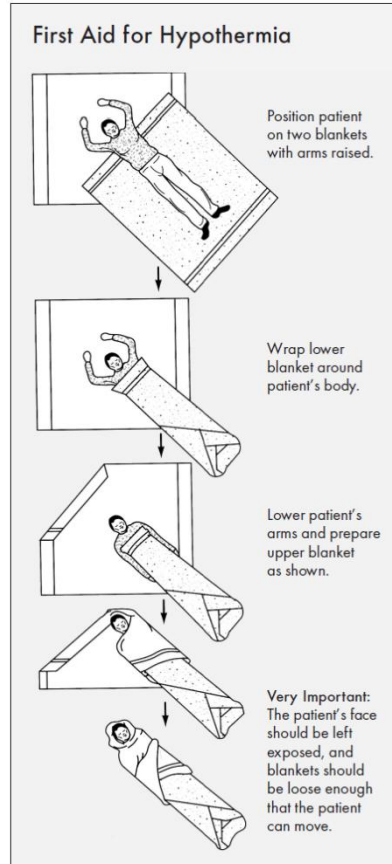
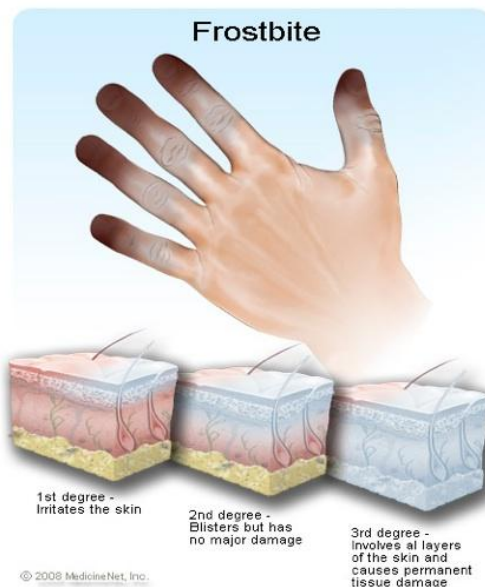
- Get into a warm area, preferably indoors. Stay there.
- Remove any wet clothing.
- Warm the body gradually and gently (place hot water bottles or pocket heaters in arm pits, under the feet, nearby the groin; wrap them in blankets; place them near a fire)
- Provide warm water or juice (not tea or coffee!)
- Don't massage their limbs
- Seek medical attention

Hypothermia Wrap



Preventative Measures:

- Dress in loose layers (tight clothing will make you colder)
- Wear wool (even when wet, it keeps you warmer), polar fleece, waterproof outer layers, moisture wicking base layers
- Avoid cotton!
- Check the weather forecast in advance and know the recommended length of time to be outdoors with the wind chill factor
- Take regular breaks indoors with hot beverages and snacks (eat food to replenish calories your body is using to heat itself)



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- Carry extra clothing with you
- Don't sit directly on the ground
- In water, make sure everyone is wearing PFDs and knows the HELP position
- Avoid drinks with caffeine in them (they dehydrate you, and over-stimulate you)
- Go to the bathroom often and keep yourself hydrated
- Use the buddy system and do regular group check-ins if doing independent activities
- Bring along emergency heating devices like blankets, hand/foot warmers, and hot water bottles
- If doing activities far from medical attention, get further training in hypothermia treatment in the outdoors

Remember that hypothermia can happen anytime you shock your body with temperature changes -- even in the summer after swimming in cold water!

You can lose heat through:

- Radiation - heat radiating off your body, so cover up your skin
- Convection - heat loss to the air around you
- Conduction - heat loss through direct contact (such as to the ground)
- Respiration
- Evaporation - heat loss through sweating

If you limit your heat loss to these sources, you limit your risk of hypothermia.