

Cold Sucks...hypothermia + frostbite



Living in Canada in winter, we should be experts on dressing for the cold. However, we may be unprepared, unaware of weather effects or simply not know first aid for these emergencies. Our bodies work best around 98.6° F / 37.5° C. If temperature drops, we need to be cautious. The ill, the elderly and children are susceptible to the cold compared to healthy adults. Medications and medical conditions also make it harder for the body to stay warm.



FROSTBITE

> exposure to below-freezing temperatures can cause frostbite, a rare but serious condition that requires emergency care. Frostbite can develop within minutes in extreme cold and can affect any skin area, especially extremities

SIGNS + SYMPTOMS:

- > aching pain or numbness on affected areas
- > skin that feels hard and waxy, with a white or grayish yellow colour
- > blisters



FROSTBITE FIRST AID:

- > move person to warm, dry area
- > do not thaw frozen areas repeatedly [warming + re-freezing can cause permanent damage]
- > remove wet or tight clothing
- > do not rub affected areas - treat gently
- > place area(s) in warm water for ~30 min.
- > do not use dry heat [fireplace, oven, pad]
- > loosely wrap warmed areas with clean bandages + between toes/ fingers
- > seek medical attention

HYPOTHERMIA

Core body [trunk region] temperature drops below normal and 35° C or less is extremely dangerous.

temp.	signs	first aid
36° C	Cold feet and hands, pale skin, puffy face	Replace wet clothes, dry, dress [including head] avoid sweating, external warmth [bath, fire], warm sweet drinks + food
35° C	Shivering [some cases], sleepy, slurring, angry	
<35° C	clumsy, confused, slow, may appear drunk, irrational	911/ EMS, rest, be gentle, no external warmth, except to trunk, internal warming, monitor
33° C	muscle stiffness	lie with feet slightly raised
32° C	shivering stops, collapse	gently transfer to hospital
31° C	semi/ unconscious	Monitor breathing and pulse, recovery position + turn every 2 hours
29° C	slow pulse/ breathing	
<28° C	cardiac arrest/ death	don't give up treatment

NOTE: not dead until warm + dead. First Aider can't declare death.

Be aware: skin may warm up quicker than core!

HANDLE GENTLY AT ALL TIMES!

first aid/ wellness scenario #15

Answers next bulletin

? 1. Name 3 products NOT recommended when creating a safe sleep environment.

2. Name 3 'Safe Sleep' tips.

Answers to last 2HEALTH Bulletin's scenario #14:

1. How can you be carry or keep first aid items closeby + available? > have gloves + face shield on keychain pouch, first aid kit in door of vehicle, compact kit in diaper bag or gym bag and in convenient place at home + office.

2. Name 5 items that are essential in a car kit?
> seat belt cutter, instant cold pack, flashlight, light stick, emergency blanket, waterproof matches, bleeding management,

PREVENTION of Frostbite + Hypothermia

- > wool blends are best and avoid cottons - wet clothes lose 90% of its insulating value
- > loose-fitting, layered clothes - wear hats, scarf, mittens and cover extremities
- > limit cold exposure to short intervals - seek warm shelter frequently
 - especially for people who work outdoors or in cold environments
- > wind accelerates cold emergencies - dress properly or avoid long exposure
- > prepared traveller: charged cell phone, gas in vehicle, emergency kit [blankets, etc.]
- > stay hydrated with non-alcoholic and non-caffeine drinks

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