

# Frostbite and Hypothermia



## BE PREPARED FOR COLD WEATHER

### Keep moving to keep warm

#### TIPS FOR PREVENTION

- Pay attention to weather forecasts.
- Dress in several layers of loose warm clothing.
- Wear hats that fully cover the ears, warm boots, & mittens.
- Drink plenty of warm fluids but avoid alcohol & caffeine.
- Avoid or limit outdoor activities when the temperature nears or dips below 5°F (-15°C). (CDC 2013).
- Take frequent breaks indoors from the cold.

#### THE FACTS (CDC 2013)

- Hypothermia is a medical emergency.
- In the U.S., an average of 1,300 deaths per year is associated with cold exposure.
- 67% of hypothermia-related deaths were men.
- Alcohol and drug use increases the chances of suffering a frostbite injury and/or hypothermia.
- Those who suffer from diabetes, heart conditions, as well as infants and the elderly, are at greater risk of sustaining hypothermia in cold weather.
- Signs of hypothermia include slurred speech, shivering, weakness, confusion, drowsiness and/or loss of consciousness.

**Transfer to a verified Burn Center within 12 hours of exposure for a frostbitten limb offers the best chance of preserving fingers and toes.**

#### WHAT IS FROSTBITE/HYPOTHERMIA

- Frostbite is freezing of exposed body parts such as the fingers, toes, nose, or earlobes.
- The affected area is cold to touch, may appear cherry-red, mottled, very pale, or even white.
- The skin may have a feeling of numbness, “pins & needles,” or is very painful especially when re-warming.
- Hypothermia occurs when the body temperature cools to a life-threatening level and sometimes accompanies frostbite injury.

#### THE FIX

- Seek medical attention as soon as possible!
- Don't ignore shivering – it's the first sign that the body is losing heat. Get indoors!
- Remove wet clothing and wrap in warm dry clothing.
- Warm the center of the body first using blankets & warm beverages, if alert.
- If blisters form, leave them intact.

#### CAR SAFETY

Remember to have blankets, water & dried food, shovel, flashlight, mobile phone, & a brightly colored cloth to hang from car window. If you become stranded, remember to stay in your car, stay awake, run the car 10 minutes every hour opening window slightly to let air in and ensure snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe.



**BURN  
PREVENTION**

American Burn Association  
312-642-9260  
[www.ameriburn.org](http://www.ameriburn.org)

Improving the lives of those  
affected by burn injuries