

# WINTER SAFETY

Exposure to cold weather conditions can be extremely dangerous and can make existing health conditions worse. Knowing the signs of frostbite and hypothermia can help keep you safe.

## FROSTBITE

Frostbite is a type of injury caused by freezing. It most commonly affects the nose, fingers, toes, and ears.

Frostbite can cause permanent damage, and severe cases can lead to amputation (removing the affected body part). **Seek immediate medical attention if you are feeling symptoms from stage 2 or 3.**

- **Stage 1:** Skin feels cold, sore, and painful (frostnip)
- **Stage 2:** Skin feels like pins and needles, pain and swelling (surface frostbite)
- **Stage 3:** Skin feels numb, changes in color, feels hard and waxy (deep frostbite)

## HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia is a medical condition caused by exposure to cold, wet, or windy conditions where the body can no longer keep itself warm internally.

### MILD

- Shivering
- Exhaustion
- Hands are numb and clumsy
- Skin is cold to touch
- Sleepiness

### MODERATE

- Can't stop shivering
- Fingers don't work (can't zip a coat)
- May be dazed, slurring words
- Irrational behavior - may try to undress

### SEVERE

- Slows or stops shivering
- Skin is pale
- Dilated pupils
- Muscle stiffness
- Can't walk, lays down
- Slow pulse and heart rate

Hypothermia is a medical emergency. Call 911 and get medical attention as soon as possible for moderate or severe symptoms.

## COLD WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

- Seek out warming centers, shelters, or covered areas that block wind and rain.
- Sitting or lying directly on the ground is colder - create a barrier under your body using cardboard, pallets or sleeping pads.
- Insulate jackets and sleeping area with newspapers, cardboard, or plastic.
- Keep your body as dry as possible, especially the layer closest to your skin.

- Layer clothing - especially on hands, feet, head, neck, and face.
- Hunger and dehydration make your body more susceptible to cold.
- Drink lots of liquids, especially warm (not hot) drinks.
- Ensure that fires are able to be contained and put out - safest when kept small, on concrete/asphalt, and away from buildings or foliage.

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# SAFER USE IN THE COLD

Using substances in combination with cold or freezing temperatures can pose additional health risks.

Have a trusted person nearby in case of a medical emergency or call **SafeSpot at 800-972-0590** -open 24/7.

Minimize mixing substances and space out doses - this will allow you to keep an eye on how substances are affecting your ability to deal with the cold.

Avoid drinking alcohol to warm up. Alcohol lowers your body's heat production.

Being cold can make locating and hitting veins harder, which can lead to missed shots and abscesses. If you can't hit a vein, it is best to choose another route of administration or warm up your body before trying again.

Using substances in cold weather decreases the body's ability to regulate internal temperature - try to stay dry and warm.

Being cold can dull senses, which may cause someone to use more of a substance to feel the same effects. This can increase risk of overdose or overamping.

Because opioids are depressants, overdose and hypothermia can look similar (shallow breathing, loss of consciousness, slowing down). If breathing slows too much or stops, give naloxone, call 911, and begin rescue breathing.

## NALOXONE TIPS FOR COLD WEATHER USE

If Naloxone is frozen, it must be thawed before use. Call 911 and begin rescue breathing while waiting. Once thawed, give the naloxone and then continue rescue breaths.



- Keeping naloxone close to your body can prevent it from freezing (inside your coat or shirt).
- Thaw naloxone quickly by holding it in your armpit or against skin. Do not put it in hot water or a microwave.
- Naloxone that has been thawed is still effective!

## Additional Resources



**NMHealth**

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