



# Frostbite



## What is Frostbite?

Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation.

## What are the Warning Signs of Frostbite?

At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin-frostbite may be beginning.

Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite:

- A white or grayish-yellow skin area
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- Numbness

## How do I Treat Frostbite?

- Frostbite and hypothermia both result from exposure to cold. If you suspect someone has frostbite, also check if the affected person shows signs of hypothermia.
- Hypothermia is a more serious medical condition and requires emergency medical assistance.
- Symptoms of hypothermia may include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss and slurred speech
- If there is frostbite, but no sign of hypothermia, and immediate medical care is not available:
  - ❖ Get into a warm room and change out of wet clothes as soon as possible.
  - ❖ Immerse the affect area in warm (not hot) water.
  - ❖ You may also warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten

fingers. Stop the re-warming process when the skin becomes pink.

- ❖ Do not rub or massage the frostbitten area at all. This can cause more damage.
- ❖ Do not use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

## How Can I Protect Myself From Frostbite?

- Stay updated on weather forecasts. If it's extremely cold, even brief exposure to cold can cause frostbite.
- Dress in layers of clothing that can be put on and taken off easily. Make sure as much skin as possible is covered in cold temperatures.

Adults and children should wear:

- ❖ A hat
  - ❖ A scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth
  - ❖ Sleeves that are snug at the wrist
  - ❖ Mittens (they are warmer than gloves)
  - ❖ Water-resistant coat
  - ❖ Waterproof and insulated boots or shoes.
- Change kids out of wet clothing or shoes as soon as possible.

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