

# COLD WEATHER HEALTH ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Cold weather can lead to serious health issues. Exposure to cold may lead to low body temperature, frostbite, hypothermia, and even death. Shoveling snow or exercising in the cold could lead to heart attacks and stroke.

## HIGH-RISK FACTORS

Cold-related illness can sometimes occur at **moderate temperatures**. Wind, humidity, or home without heat could play a role. Other factors that put individuals at risk for cold-related illness include...

- Age (young children and elderly adults)
- Underlying chronic medical illnesses and diseases, such as:
  - Psoriasis or extensive skin burns
  - Under-active thyroid
  - Under-active adrenal gland
- Alcohol use
- Physical condition
- Medications that can affect an individual's judgment, such as Valium and phenobarbital
- Over-exertion and sweating while outside

## HYPOTHERMIA

### SIGNS

- Shivering
- Increased breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate
- Pale white skin
- Fatigue or amnesia
- Difficulty with muscle coordination
- Difficulty walking and talking
- Poor judgment, confusion and combativeness

### TREATMENT

- Seek medical attention immediately
- Take shelter and remove wet clothes
- Dress in warm, dry clothes
- Re-warm the body

## FROSTBITE

### SIGNS

- First sign: redness or pain in any skin area
- Pale frozen skin (with or without blisters)
- Skin feels firm or waxy
- Numbness

### TREATMENT

- Seek medical attention immediately
- Take shelter and remove wet clothes
- Place frostbite in warm-to-touch (**NOT hot**) water
- Elevate frostbitten area
- DO NOT rub frostbitten tissue
- Avoid refreezing of thawed frostbitten tissue

## MORE INFORMATION

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Updated 09/2017