

Hypothermia

What is it?

Occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat and your body temperature falls below 95 F (35 C).

Hypothermia is often caused by exposure to cold weather or immersion in a cold body of water. It can also be caused by ongoing exposure to indoor temperatures below 50 F (10 C). You could be at increased risk if you're also exhausted or dehydrated.

Symptoms:

Signs and symptoms of hypothermia usually develop slowly and may include:

- Shivering, though this may stop as body temperature drops
- Slurred speech or mumbling
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Weak pulse
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination
- Drowsiness or very low energy
- Confusion or memory loss

- Loss of consciousness
- Bright red, cold skin (in infants)

Plan of Action:

If you suspect someone has hypothermia, **call 911 or your local emergency number.**

Then immediately take these steps:

- Gently move the person out of the cold. If going indoors isn't possible, protect the person from the wind, especially around the neck and head. Insulate the individual from the cold ground.
- Gently remove wet clothing. Replace wet things with warm, dry coats or blankets.
- If further warming is needed, do so gradually. For example, apply warm, dry compresses to the center of the body — neck, chest and groin. The CDC says another option is using an electric blanket, if available. If you use hot water bottles or a chemical hot pack, first wrap it in a towel before applying.
- Offer the person warm, sweet, nonalcoholic drinks.
- Begin CPR if the person shows no signs of life, such as breathing, coughing or movement.

Caution:

Do not rewarm the person too quickly, such as with a heating lamp or hot bath.

Don't attempt to warm the arms and legs. Heating or massaging the limbs of someone in this condition can stress the heart and lungs.

Don't give the person alcohol or cigarettes. Alcohol hinders the rewarming process, and tobacco products interfere with circulation that is needed for rewarming.

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