

Frostbite Facts

For winter safety tips visit:

The American Academy of Pediatricians
<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/dcwintertips.cfm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.asp>

For winter pet safety tips visit:

Oregon Veterinary Medical Association
<http://oregonvma.org/care-health/winter-pet-care-tips>

Introduction

- 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.

Warning signs of frostbite

- Warning signs of frostbite include numbness and a white or grayish-yellow color to the affected skin, which may feel unusually firm or waxy.
- People with frostbite are often unaware until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb.
- 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.

Treatment for frostbite

- If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care.
- 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.
- Symptoms of hypothermia may include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss and slurred speech.
- Hypothermia is a more serious medical condition and requires emergency medical assistance.
- If there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and immediate medical care is not available:
 - ❖ Get to a warm place as soon as possible.
 - ❖ Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes as this increases the damage.
 - ❖ Immerse the affected area in warm—not hot—water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
 - ❖ Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
 - ❖ Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
 - ❖ Don't 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.

Note: These measures don't take the place of proper medical care. Frostbite should be evaluated by a health care provider. A first aid course can help you prepare for cold-weather health problems. Knowing what to do is an important part of protecting your health and the health of others.

See the back side of this fact sheet for more cold weather tips!



OHA Facebook

www.facebook.com/OregonHealthAuthority



OHA Twitter

www.Twitter.com/OHAOregon

For More Information

For questions regarding winter preparedness activities, contact your local health department.

Local Health Departments

Baker	541-523-8211
Benton.....	541-766-6835
Clackamas	503-655-8430
Clatsop	503-325-8500
Columbia.....	503-397-4651
Coos.....	541-756-2020
.....	ext. 510
Crook.....	541-447-5165
Curry.....	541-247-3300
Deschutes.....	541-322-7400
Douglas.....	800-234-0985
Gilliam	541-384-2061
Grant	541-575-0429
Harney.....	541-573-2271
Hood River.....	541-386-1115
Jackson	541-774-8209
Jefferson.....	541-475-4456
Josephine	541-474-5325
Klamath.....	541-882-8846
Lake	541-947-6045
Lane.....	541-682-4041
Lincoln.....	541-265-4112
Linn.....	541-967-3888
Malheur.....	541-889-7279
Marion.....	503-588-5357
Morrow	541-676-5421
Multnomah	503-988-3674
Polk.....	503-623-8175
Sherman.....	541-506-2600
Tillamook.....	503-842-3900
Umatilla.....	541-278-5432
Union.....	541-962-8801
Wallowa	541-426-4848
Wasco.....	541-506-2600
Washington	503-846-8881
Wheeler.....	541-763-2725
Yamhill.....	503-434-7525

What to do if you get stranded in your car in cold weather

- If you have a cell phone available, call for help.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna as a signal to rescuers.
- Wrap your entire body, including your head, in extra clothing, blankets, or newspapers. Have others in the car do the same.
- Help keep infants and small children warm using your own body heat.
- Stay awake. You will be less vulnerable to cold-related health problems.
- Run the motor (and heater) for about 10 minutes per hour, opening one window slightly to let in air. Make sure that snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe—this will reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to improve your circulation and stay warmer.
- Do not eat un-melted snow because it will lower your body temperature.

How to dress and other tips for cold weather

- When going outside in cold weather, wear several layers of loose clothing, including a hat. Layering provides better insulation. Layers can also be removed if you become too hot.
- Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind. As the speed of the wind increases, it can carry heat away from your body much more quickly. When there are high winds, serious weather-related health problems are more likely, even when temperatures are only cool.
- Wool, silk, or polypropylene inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton.
- Stay dry. Wet clothing chills the body rapidly. Excess perspiration will increase heat loss, so remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm.
- Be sure to protect the ears, face, hands and feet in extremely cold weather.
- 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.
- Move into warm locations periodically. Limit the amount of time outside on extremely cold days.
- Move around. Physical activity raises body temperature.
- **Do not ignore shivering.** It's an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is a signal to return indoors.
- Eat well-balanced meals to help you stay warmer. Do not drink alcoholic beverages which cause your body to lose heat more rapidly.

V.1.2 revised 07/01/2011