

ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES – COLD EXPOSURE

When cold exposure affects the entire body: hypothermia or general cooling develops.
When cold exposure affects a particular body part: local cooling, or frostbite occurs.
Frostbite most commonly affects the ears, nose, face, hands, feet, and toes.

A. Perform **Initial Treatment / Universal Patient Care Protocol** and follow the proper protocol for medical management based on clinical presentation.

1. Place patient in warm environment.
2. Treat with warm, humidified oxygen and warmed IV fluids.
3. Remove all wet clothing.
4. Insulate core (head, neck, and trunk) with warm blankets.
5. Rapid smooth transport.

B. If patient is hypothermic, alert, and responding appropriately:

1. Keep the patient still and handle very gently.
2. Actively rewarm the patient by applying heat packs, hot water bottles, or electric heating pads to neck, chest, and abdomen.
3. Allow patient to slowly drink warm fluids, but do not allow patient to drink stimulants.

4. In **consultation with Medical Command**, establish mode (ground vs. air) and destination of transport.



5. Monitor vital signs closely during transport.

C. If patient is hypothermic, unconscious or not responding appropriately:

1. Handle patient as gently as possible and expedite transport.
2. Wrap patient in insulated blankets for passive rewarming only.
3. Give nothing by mouth.
4. Continue IV normal saline at KVO.
5. If patient has no pulse, perform CPR with the following cautions:

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- a. Check pulse for at least 60 seconds.
 - b. Defibrillate VF/VT at **max joules**.
 - c. Withhold IV medications until patient is rewarmed to core temperature of > 86° F.
6. Expedite transport.

7. In **consultation with Medical Command**, establish mode (ground vs. air) and destination of transport.



8. Further treatment per **order of Medical Command**.

D. Frostbite:

1. Remove constrictive clothing and jewelry and cover with dry dressing.
2. **Do not** rub, massage area or break blisters. Do not apply direct heat, allow patient to use affected area, or re-expose to cold.
3. Transport and notify **Medical Command**.