

Recognize the signs of hypothermia

The arrival of cold weather provides opportunities to romp in the snow, ski the slopes or enjoy an afternoon ice skating on a frozen pond. But spending time outdoors in the cold or even in an indoor space that is not adequately warmed can result in a serious health condition known as hypothermia.

Hypothermia is defined as a potentially dangerous decrease in body temperature that is usually caused by prolonged exposure to cold conditions. Outdoors enthusiasts' risk for hypothermia increases as winter progresses and temperatures drop even further. However, hypothermia can occur other times of the year if the body is chilled. For example, hypothermia can occur when boats capsize and boaters are suddenly tossed into a body of water, or when hikers get caught in the rain during evening hikes. WebMD says normal body temperature is 98.6 F (37 C), and hypothermia begins when body temperature falls below 95 F (35 C).

When the body reaches lower temperatures, this can affect the

heart, nervous system and certain organs, advises The Mayo Clinic. If left untreated, hypothermia may lead to cardiac and respiratory arrest.

Early symptoms of hypothermia include shivering, fast breathing, cold and pale skin,

heat effectively, and direct contact with cold surfaces also can bring on hypothermia more quickly.

Infants and the elderly may be at a higher risk of hypothermia because their bodies aren't attuned to regulating temperature.

Cover, Overexertion, Layers, Dry.
- Cover: Wear protective coverings, including mittens and hats, to prevent body heat from escaping through the extremities.

- Overexertion: Avoid activities that cause sweating. Together, wet clothing and perspiration can cause the body to lose heat more quickly.

- Layers: Loose-fitting, layered clothing can offer protection from the cold and wind. Wool, silk or polypropylene insulate more effectively than cotton.

- Dry: Remaining as dry as possible is essential. This includes getting out of wet clothing promptly.

Children and the elderly may need to wear an extra layer or two than healthy adults would wear in the same conditions. Drivers should bring along blankets and emergency supplies in the event a car breaks down in cold weather.

Hypothermia is a risk any time of the year, but particularly when the weather grows chilly. Taking precautions to stay warm and dry, and knowing the signs of a drop in body temperature, can help individuals stay safe.



Hypothermia occurs when body temperature drops below the norm. It is a serious health risk.

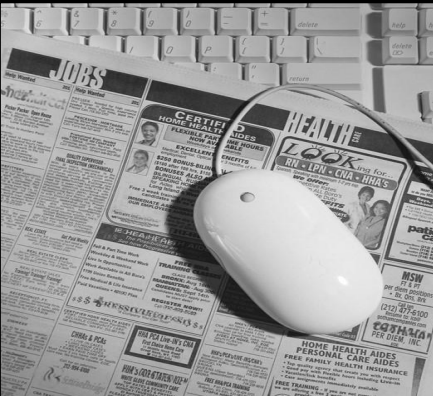
tiredness, confusion, and slurred speech. As body temperatures drop, shivering may stop and a person may faint.

Hypothermia frequently develops when people are exposed to the cold without warm and dry clothing for protection. Hypothermia also may develop when people get wet or are caught unaware of changes in weather. Wind removes body

Older adults may suffer hypothermia, for example, after spending several hours in a house with no heat during a power outage. The Mayo Clinic adds that certain medical conditions affect the body's ability to regulate body temperature, and certain medications may elevate risk as well.

To prevent hypothermia, health experts advise remembering the acronym COLD:

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