

# *Winter Safety: Frostbite*

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A person with frostbite may also be suffering from hypothermia, or lowered body temperature. Symptoms may include shivering, lack of coordination, slurred speech, confusion, drowsiness, weak pulse and shallow breathing.

In cold climates, everyone is susceptible to frostbite, but taking a few simple precautions can help keep you safe and healthy during the winter season.

## **Causes**

Frostbite is caused by prolonged exposure to cold temperatures, usually accompanied by a low wind chill factor or by brief exposure to excessively frigid or wet conditions.

## **Risk Factors**

Certain people are more susceptible to developing frostbite, including children, the elderly and those with circulatory problems. People who have diabetes are also at a greater risk.

## **Symptoms**

Symptoms of frostbite may include partial or complete numbness, discoloration of the skin and burning and/or tingling sensations. If left untreated, frostbitten skin gradually darkens after a few hours. Skin destroyed by frostbite is completely black and looks loose and flayed, as if burnt.

## **Prevention**

To reduce your risk of frostbite, it's important to protect your hands, feet, nose and ears. Bundle in warm, layered and loose-fitting clothing when heading out into winter's worst weather.

At the first sign of redness or pain in your skin, which may indicate that frostbite is developing, get out of the cold. Also, avoid drinking alcoholic beverages; alcohol may prevent you from realizing that your body is becoming too cold. You should also avoid smoking cigarettes, which can constrict your blood vessels and cut off blood flow, increasing your risk of frostbite.

## **Treatment**

Move to a warm area and remove any wet clothing as soon as possible. Do not rub or massage your skin or break any blisters, and do not apply direct heat from heating pads, radiators or fires. Instead, place the affected area in warm, not hot, water until the skin is soft and sensation has returned. If no water is nearby, cup your hands around the affected area and blow warm air onto it. Next, wrap the area in clean dressings and seek medical help.

If it is unlikely that the affected area can be kept thawed before seeking medical attention, do not take steps to treat it; re-exposure to cold can cause more extensive and severe damage.

Contact [Sullivan Benefits](#) for assistance on how to educate your employees and their family members about Winter Season health and safety.

Congratulations, just taking the time to read this article is a positive step toward introducing wellness and the benefits available from a healthier lifestyle. Thank you for your time and THINK WELLNESS!

*Source: Zywave*