

## Serious Signs

Hypothermia is impossible to detect by the victim, because it dulls the mind and prevents the person from recognizing the danger in time to seek help. Many hypothermia victims are not even aware that they are cold. Look for these signs, especially in infants and those over 60.

- **Difficulty walking**
- **Confused thinking**
- **Weakness or fatigue**
- **Shallow breathing**
- **Slurred speech**
- **Trembling on one side of the body**
- **Shivering**
- **Weak pulse**
- **Bloated face**
- **Drowsiness**

## What to do

If you suspect that someone has hypothermia:

- **Seek immediate medical attention** from qualified medical personnel who are trained to handle these situations.

While waiting for the doctor or ambulance:

- **Cover the victim** with non-electric blankets.



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# Cold Stress



**FACTS ABOUT HYPOTHERMIA**

*Hypothermia, or cold stress, is a serious medical condition that can be fatal if not detected and treated early. Hypothermia occurs when exposure to cold causes one's body to lose heat faster than it can be replaced. The result? A dangerous drop in body temperature (95° F and below). Beware, the signs of cold stress are not always obvious.*

### **Watch Your Step**

These factors make you more vulnerable to hypothermia or cold stress.

- **Old age and infancy.** Elderly people and young babies are especially at risk from cold weather. For them, even a small drop in temperature, if prolonged, can make a difference.
- **Illness.** Health problems such as heart, circulatory, or thyroid diseases, diabetes, arthritis or other conditions that reduce mobility.
- **Fatigue or poor physical condition.**
- **Alcohol.** Drinking alcohol lowers your body's temperature, and dulls awareness to the cold.
- **Inadequate clothing.**
- **Medications.** Some combinations of drugs lower the body's resistance to cold.

### **Protect Yourself**

You can prevent hypothermia by taking steps to keep warm this winter:

- **Dress warmly.** Wear a cap or hat, because you lose most of your body heat through the top of your head. Wear layers of warm clothing, because multiple layers trap heat even better than one thick coat. Dress warmly even indoors, and use a lap blanket when sitting for long periods. Make sure children are also warmly dressed.
- **Check Medications.** Find out if any medications or combination of medications that you or someone in your care are taking lower your body's resistance to cold. Take extra precautions if they do.
- **Take care of your health.** Eat nutritious, high-energy foods such as oatmeal or soup. Eat at least one hot meal a day. Exercise regularly to generate heat production in your muscles. If you or someone you know has limited mobility, or if dealing with an infant, ask your doctor what exercises can be done.
- **Keep in touch with others.** Every day (or as often as possible) check in with your family, friends, or neighbors, and ask them to check in on you as well.

### **For More Information**

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