

Safety Tips

Hypothermia

When your core body temperature falls suddenly below its normal level of 98.6 F, you are hypothermic. Skiers, hikers and fisherman are at risk, and this condition can occur unexpectedly, even on days when the temperature is 60 degrees. All it takes is wet clothes and a brisk breeze. Other factors can contribute, such as if you are hungry and tired, or if you've been drinking alcohol.

1. You may not be aware of the condition, and others may not notice until your core body temperature has dropped dangerously low.
2. To treat someone for hypothermia, gradually warm their body. Get them out of wet or cold clothing, and wrap them in layers of dry, warm clothing. Give them something warm to drink (avoid alcohol and caffeine).
3. Don't move the victim unless staying put is even more risky or dangerous.
4. To avoid hypothermia:
 - Wear clothes that are made of wool and that are windproof. In spite of advances in synthetic fibers, wool is still a superior insulator.
 - Wear loose garments that don't restrict your circulation.
 - Layers of light clothing are better than a heavy layer.
 - If you get wet, change into dry clothes.
 - Keep your hands, head, and feet covered--that's where your body loses the most heat.
5. Pay attention to the forecast winds as well as the temperature when deciding what to wear.
6. Symptoms vary depending on the severity of the chill. Victims of mild hypothermia often shiver uncontrollably and appear clumsy. Moderate hypothermia slur their speech, appear dazed and act irrationally. Sometimes they don't feel cold. Victims of severe hypothermia have dilated pupils, pale skin, a slow pulse. Their muscles become rigid, and they eventually stop shivering. Ultimately, they collapse, and in the final stages, stop breathing.