

Hypothermia Due to Overexposure

What is hypothermia?

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs as a result of overexposure to cold. The core body temperature falls to 35°C (95°F) or lower.

What are the symptoms of hypothermia?

As body temperature drops, consciousness begins to get clouded. The person is pale and lethargic, appears confused or disoriented, and may hallucinate. In the beginning stages of hypothermia, the person shivers a lot, but as body temperature gets lower, shivering actually decreases. This may give people a false sense of well-being. Persons with these symptoms must be kept warm and taken immediately to hospital.

What happens in severe cases of hypothermia?

In severe hypothermia (body temperature below 30°C (86°F)) the person becomes unconscious, breathing is shallow, and pulse is irregular or hard to detect. If someone is found with these symptoms, call for immediate emergency medical treatment.

Who is at risk for developing hypothermia?

Healthy individuals exposed to cold weather or conditions for long periods of time are at risk for hypothermia. Elderly persons and infants under 1 year of age are most at risk. Infants are particularly susceptible if they are premature or small for their gestational age.

Can hypothermia be prevented?

The best way to prevent hypothermia is not to stay in an unheated home, but to move to a warm place. People who remain in unheated homes should make sure that their head, hands and feet are well covered and dry. Physical activity releases heat throughout the body so keep moving!

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