COLD WEATHER ILLNESS

MONTHLY PREPAREDNESS TOPIC

HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Hypothermia is caused by exposure to extreme cold. There are two severities of this illness, each with its own symptoms.

- Shivering
- Dizziness & nausea
- Faster breathing
- Trouble speaking
- Slight confusion
- Lacking coordination
- Fatigue
- Increased heart rate
- Poor decision making (removing warm clothes)
- Drowsiness or low energy
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Loss of consciousness

MILD HYPOTHERMIA SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Cold skin and a prickling feeling
- Numbness
- Red, white, bluish-white, or grayish-yellow skin color
- Hard or waxy skin
- Clumsiness
- Blistering

TREATMENT

Seek medical attention immediately do the following while waiting:
- Protect from further cold
- Do not walk on feet if frost bitten
- Do not break blisters
- Reduce pain with ibuprofen

FROSTBITE

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Frostnip is the first stage. Skin reddens and feels very cold, becomes prickly and numb. As skin warms, pain and tingling may occur. Skin is not permanently damaged.
- Superficial Frostbite is the second stage. Red skin will turn white or pale. If treated with rewarming, will cause the surface of skin to appear mottled, blue or purple. Stinging, burning, and swelling may occur, along with fluid-filled blisters that may appear 24-36 hours after rewarming.
- Severe (deep) Frostbite is the final stage. It affects all layers of the skin. Will lead to loss of sensation in affected area. Joints or muscles may stop working properly. Large blisters will appear 24-48 hours after rewarming and afterward the area will turn black and hard as tissue dies.

STAGES OF ILLNESS

Essential Items:

- Blankets – lightweight space blankets are great to keep in your home or vehicle emergency kit.
- Warm gloves and socks – your extremities (hands and feet) are the most susceptible to frostbite.
- Food and water – staying fueled and hydrated can help your body running efficiently and keep you warm.
- Safe source of heat – remember not to heat affected areas too quickly!

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Dress in loose layers – heat gets trapped within layers.
- Monitor yourself and if you are in a group, use the buddy system!
- Stay dry by wearing a wicking fabric next to the body and a breathable, water-repellent outer layer.
- Stay adequately hydrated and eat nourishing regular meals.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- DO Rewarm gradually.
- Use lukewarm water
- Place area against warm skin
- Use warm towel or blanket
- DO NOT rub the affected area with anything. (snow, ice, cloth, hands)
- DO NOT allow the area to become refrozen.

TREATMENT

- Call 911 if you see someone exhibiting these signs and symptoms.
- If possible, take the person slowly and carefully inside.
- Carefully remove wet clothing, and cover the person with layers of blankets while you wait for emergency help to arrive.

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Monitor yourself and if you are in a group, use the buddy system!
- Stay dry by wearing a wicking fabric next to the body and a breathable, water-repellent outer layer.
- Stay adequately hydrated and eat nourishing regular meals.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine.