



Cold Weather Injury and Illness Tips

Frostbite occurs when the heat supply to a part of the body is insufficient to counteract the heat loss and results in actual freezing. The frozen area is normally small and most commonly occurs on the nose, ears, cheeks and fingers. The signs and symptoms for frostbite can include frostnip (initially red, then white and painless with soft skin). Superficial frostbite shows white and waxy skin with firm, soft tissue while deep frostbite shows signs of blotchy skin with a white to purplish tinge, numbness and solid skin over entire depth. Treatment for first and second degree frostbite includes warming the tissue with warm water or a warm hand over the involved area. This area will be extremely sensitive to further cold exposure and should be protected accordingly. The treatment for third degree frostbite is to transport the person to a medical facility immediately. There is often permanent damage with this type of injury.

Hypothermia occurs when a person's core temperature falls below 95 degrees F. At this point the body is unable to warm itself without outside assistance. The signs and symptoms include shivering, the skin appears cold and pale, and there is depressed respiration rate and slow irregular pulse. A person may show signs of altered mental state, irritability, loss of coordination, weakness, and difficulty speaking with decrease in body temperature. Treatment for hypothermia includes prevention of further heat loss, warming and promptly transporting to E.R. Warming includes removing the individual from the cold environment, wrapping in blankets and giving warm fluids to drink.

Tips to avoid cold injury:

1. Cover all exposed surfaces in a cold environment.
2. Avoid contact with colder objects or cold wind.
3. Wear several layers of light, dry, loose fitting clothes.
4. Change clothing if it becomes wet.
5. Know your environment and be prepared.

In Michigan, every patient must have a prescription for rehab from their physician. A patient has the choice to go where they know they will get the best treatment for their specific goals. At Tri-Rehab, your insurance coverage will be verified and your first appointment will be scheduled with 24 hours.