

Extreme Cold Safety

When extreme cold arrives, there are many challenges to staying safe. It is important to take extreme cold seriously and minimize your risk of exposure.

Preventive Action is Your Best Defense

Prepare your home and car in advance for cold-weather emergencies:

- Winterize your home by insulating, using weather stripping and caulking, and installing storm windows.
- Create a home emergency kit that has enough supplies for three to seven days.
- Keep antifreeze and windshield washer fluids at proper levels in your car and have a full tank of gas.
- Carry a vehicle emergency kit that includes warm clothing, a blanket, a scraper, a shovel, a flashlight with extra batteries and jumper cables.
- If you must go outside, make it brief and avoid physical exertion, as cold weather puts extra strain on the heart.

Wear several layers of loose-fitting clothing:

- Outer layer—Wear a coat made from a tightly woven fabric that is wind- and water-resistant.
- Inner layer—Fabrics like wool, silk or polypropylene hold more body heat than cotton.
- Wear a hat, a scarf to cover your face and mouth, mittens and water-resistant boots.
- Remove extra layers of clothing if you feel too warm, as excess perspiration can increase heat loss.
- Avoid wet clothing, which loses 90 percent of its insulating value.
- Shivering should not be ignored; it means your body is losing heat.
- Do not drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages, which cause your body to lose heat more rapidly.
- Don't forget to bring your pets indoors!

Frostbite

Frostbite is the most common injury resulting from exposure to severe cold. It is an injury to the body that causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas, usually the fingers, toes, ears, nose, cheeks or chin. Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite:

- White or grayish-yellow skin area
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- Numbness

At the first sign of redness or pain on your skin, return indoors, as frostbite may be beginning.

Hypothermia

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced and the result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. It may make you unable to think clearly or move well, so it is particularly dangerous because you may not even know you have it. Hypothermia can also occur at cool temperatures if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat or submersion in cold water. Any of the following signs may indicate hypothermia:

- Shivering
- Exhaustion
- Confusion
- Fumbling hands
- Memory loss
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness



You should seek emergency treatment immediately if you think you may have hypothermia or frostbite.

For more information, visit www.AUS.com/Tips