

# WINTER SAFETY



Using substances in combination with cold or freezing temperatures can pose additional health risks. Knowing the signs of frostbite and hypothermia can help keep you safe.

## RISK FACTORS

- Cold weather dulls senses and causes bodily functions to slow down, making it harder to recognize overdoses.
- Dulled senses may cause someone to use more of the substance to feel the same effects.
- Individuals are more likely to be alone during winter as cold weather causes people to find shelter/reprieve indoors.
- Mixing cold weather and substances decreases the body's ability to regulate internal temperature.

## FROSTBITE

Frostbite is damage that can happen to your skin if temperatures drop below freezing (32 F). It most commonly affects the nose, fingers, toes, and ears. Symptoms of frostbite depend on how long skin has been exposed to the cold. Seek immediate medical attention if you are feeling any symptoms from stage 2 or 3.

**Stage 1:** Cold, sore, and painful (frostnip)

**Stage 2:** Pins and needles (surface frostbite)

**Stage 3:** Numbness (deep frostbite)

## HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia is a medical condition caused by exposure to cold, wet, or windy conditions where the body can no longer keep itself warm internally. Hypothermia is a medical emergency that should be treated, especially if you are experiencing any moderate or severe symptoms. Even if your body temperature improves, keep yourself dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck. Call 911 and get medical attention as soon as possible.

### EARLY

- Shivering/chattering teeth
- Exhaustion
- Clumsiness
- Slowed movement
- Sleepiness
- Weak pulse

### MODERATE

- Slowed breathing and heart rate
- Slurred speech
- Decreased shivering
- Bluish color to skin
- Increased muscle stiffness
- Loss of consciousness

### SEVERE

- Loss of shivering.
- Low blood pressure
- Absence of reflexes.
- Complete muscle stiffness.
- Loss of voluntary motion.
- Heart stops beating

## TIPS FOR SAFER USE DURING WINTER

- Seek out warming centers, shelters, or covered places that reduce the effects of the elements
- Use newspapers, cardboard, or plastic to help insulate jackets or sleeping areas
- Layer as much as possible – especially for your hands, feet, head, and face
- Have a friend or trusted person nearby in case of emergency when using drugs
  - Or visit or call [NeverUseAlone.com/1-877-696-1996](http://NeverUseAlone.com/1-877-696-1996)
- Minimize mixing substances or use less frequently
- Medications may be absorbed much slower when the body is cold. This is important to know if you are giving naloxone as an overdose response during cold weather.
- Keeping naloxone close to your body can prevent it from freezing
- Naloxone must be thawed for 15 minutes before use if frozen