

BUNDLE UP YOUR OVERCOAT

Your skin, and the tissue underneath, can freeze when they are exposed to extreme cold temperatures. This is a condition known as frostbite. Your hands, feet, nose and ears are most likely to be affected by frostbite. You can tell frostbite by the hard, pale and cold feel of skin. In the initial stage, frostbitten skin is milk-white and numb, but as the area thaws, the flesh becomes red and painful.

IF YOU GET FROSTBITE:

- Get out of the cold.
- Warm your hands by tucking them under your arms. If your nose, ears or face is frostbitten, cover them with dry, gloved hands.
- Don't rub the affected area. Remember that ice crystals have formed under the skin, and they are as sharp as glass. Contrary to the old wives' tale, never rub snow on frostbitten skin.
- Wait to thaw affected areas until there is no chance of refreezing. Once thawed, keep affected areas covered. Warm hands or feet in warm — not hot — water. You can warm other frostbitten areas, such as your nose, cheeks or ears, by covering them with your warm hands or by applying warm cloths.
- Severe frostbite, in which affected areas turn blue or black, and frostbite affecting large portions of the body, are true medical emergencies that require immediate professional care. Also seek emergency medical help if numbness remains during warming.

TO HELP PREVENT FROSTBITE:

- Dress in warm, layered, loose-fitting clothes.
- Don't drink alcohol before going into the cold. Despite the temporary warmth you might feel, alcohol actually lowers the body's core temperature and makes you more susceptible to frostbite.
- Avoid smoking: cigarettes constrict your blood vessels and increase your risk of frostbite.
- Avoid caffeine drinks: caffeine takes fluids from your body and leads to dehydration. Sport drinks that replenish your body's electrolytes are best.