

# FROSTBITE

## Factsheet

### What is frostbite?

- ✔ Frostbite is a type of injury caused by freezing. It leads to a loss of feeling and color in the areas it affects, usually extremities such as the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes.
- ✔ Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation (removing the affected body part).

### Who's most at risk?

You may have a greater chance of developing frostbite if you:

- ✔ have poor blood circulation
- ✔ are not properly dressed for extremely cold temperatures

### What are the signs and symptoms?

If you notice redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin – frostbite may be beginning. Any of the following signs may point to frostbite:

- ✔ A white or grayish-yellow skin area
- ✔ Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- ✔ Numbness

**A person who has frostbite may not know they have it until someone else points it out because the frozen parts of their body are numb.**

### What to do if you or someone you know experience frostbite

- ✔ Hypothermia is a medical emergency, get medical attention right away!
- ✔ If you are not able to get medical help right away, try to warm the person up.
  - Get the person into a warm room as soon as possible.
  - Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on feet or toes that show signs of frostbite – this increases the damage.
  - Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
  - Put the areas affected by frostbite in warm – not hot-water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
  - If warm water is not available, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, you can use the heat of an armpit to warm frostbitten fingers.
  - Do not use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can easily burn.

**Don't substitute these steps for proper medical care. Frostbite should be checked by a health care provider.**