In the winter months EMS providers often focus on treating patients suffering from the results of cold exposure, but often we forget to think about our own exposure. Cold weather can cause significant health issues. We must understand and recognize the signs and symptoms of cold exposure injuries in ourselves so we can take steps to limit the impact.

**Hypothermia**

**Definition:** A condition in which body uses up its stored energy and can no longer produce heat.

**Early Symptoms:** shivering, fatigue, loss of coordination, confusion/disorientation

**Late Symptoms:** no shivering, blue skin, dilated pupils, slowed pulse &respirations, unconscious

**Treatment:** Move to warm area; Warm center of your body; if conscious drink warm beverage; stay dry and wrapped in multiple layers

**Frost Bite**

**Definition:** Injury to the body caused by freezing, most often affecting nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes

**Symptoms:** Reduced blood flow to hands and feet, numbness, aching, tingling or stinging, bluish or pale, waxy skin

**Treatment:** Get into warm room, do not walk on frostbitten feet (if possible), immerse area in warm water or warm with body heat; do not massage frostbitten areas!

**Protect Yourself!**

Monitor your condition

Wear appropriate clothing – Layer for insulation

Protect ears, face, hands, and feet – Boots should be waterproof; wear a hat!

Move to warm locations during breaks

Carry extra socks, gloves, hats, jackets, blankets, and a change of clothes

  

Remember – you can’t help others if you become a patient yourself!