



Longfellow's Information on Hypothermia

What Is Hypothermia?

Hypothermia is a condition in which the body is unable to maintain warmth and the entire body cools. Hypothermia is very serious. It is life threatening.

What Causes Hypothermia?

Hypothermia is brought on by exposure to cold, chilling winds and by getting wet. Children and the elderly are at more of a risk for hypothermia than other people.

Certain conditions can more easily lead to hypothermia, including:

- Drinking alcohol.
- Taking drugs and certain medications.
- Some medical conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease.
- Prolonged exposure to cold, wet and/or windy conditions.
- Wet clothing.

Signals of Hypothermia

Signals of hypothermia include:

- Shivering.
- Numbness.
- Glassy stare.
- Indifference.
- Loss of consciousness.

Shivering that stops without rewarming is a sign that the person's condition is worsening. He or she needs immediate medical care.

How to Prevent Hypothermia

Protect yourself from hypothermia by:

- Always wearing a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket when around cold water.
- Wearing several layers of clothing. The first layer should keep moisture away from skin. The second layer should keep you warm. The outer layer should be waterproof or water-resistant.
- Wearing a hat. Body heat is quickly lost through the head.

Continued on next page



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What to Do If You Fall into Cold Water and Are Waiting to Be Rescued

To protect yourself from hypothermia if you fall into cold water, you should:

- Keep your head out of the water.
- Keep your clothes on.
- Get into the **HELP** position (**H**eat **E**scape **L**essening **P**osture). In this position you hold your upper arms against your sides, fold your lower arms across your chest and pull your knees up to your chest.
- If you are with other people, you can lessen heat escape if you huddle together.
- Swim to shore only if it is a short distance or if a current is carrying you toward danger.

WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET WHEN YOU ARE AROUND COLD WATER!



How Long Can You Survive in Cold Water?

The length of time you can survive in cold water depends on what you are wearing, your age, your body size and type, your fitness level, the length of exposure in the water and the temperature of the water.

You should remember that:

- Wearing a life jacket gives rescuers more time to find and help you.
- A life jacket helps conserve body heat.
- A life jacket helps keep your face out of the water.
- Wearing a life jacket increases your survival time.

Continued on next page



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How to Help Someone with Hypothermia

To care for hypothermia:

- CHECK the scene and the person.
- Send someone to CALL 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
- Gently move the person to a warm place.
- Remove any wet clothing and dry the person.
- Put on dry clothing.
- Warm the person gradually by wrapping him or her in blankets and plastic sheeting to hold in body heat.
- If you are far from medical care, position the person near a heat source. Keep checking the heat source. Keep a barrier such as a blanket, towel or clothing between the heat source and the person.
- If the person is awake, give warm liquids that do not contain alcohol or caffeine.
- **DO NOT WARM THE PERSON TOO QUICKLY**, such as by placing him or her in warm water.
- Check breathing and look for any changes in the person's condition.
- If the person is not breathing, perform CPR if you know how.
- Continue to warm the person until emergency medical services personnel take over.