



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Lawley



WINTER SAFETY: FROSTBITE

In cold climates, everyone is susceptible to frostbite, but taking a few simple precautions can help keep you safe and healthy during the winter season.

Causes

Frostbite is caused by prolonged exposure to cold temperatures, usually accompanied by a low wind chill factor or by brief exposure to excessively frigid or wet conditions.

Risk Factors

Certain people are more susceptible to developing frostbite, including children, the elderly and those with circulatory problems. People who have diabetes are also at a greater risk.

Symptoms

Symptoms of frostbite may include partial or complete numbness, discoloration of the skin and burning and/or tingling sensations. If left untreated, frostbitten skin gradually darkens after a few hours. Skin destroyed by frostbite is completely black and looks loose and flayed, as if burnt.

Prevention

To reduce your risk of frostbite, it's important to protect your hands, feet, nose and ears. Bundle in warm, layered and loose-fitting clothing when heading out into winter's worst weather.

At the first sign of redness or pain in your skin, which may indicate that frostbite is developing, get out of the cold. Also, avoid drinking alcoholic beverages—alcohol may prevent you from realizing that your body is becoming too cold. You should also avoid smoking

cigarettes, which can constrict your blood vessels and cut off blood flow, increasing your risk of frostbite.

Treatment

Move to a warm area and remove any wet clothing as soon as possible. Do not rub or massage your skin or break any blisters, and do not apply direct heat from heating pads, radiators or fires. Instead, place the affected area in warm—not hot—water until the skin is soft and sensation has returned. If no water is nearby, cup your hands around the affected area and blow warm air onto it. Next, wrap the area in clean dressings and seek medical help.

If it is unlikely that the affected area can be kept thawed before seeking medical attention, do not take steps to treat it—re-exposure to warmth can cause more extensive and severe damage.

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