



Prevention & Treatment of Frost Bite

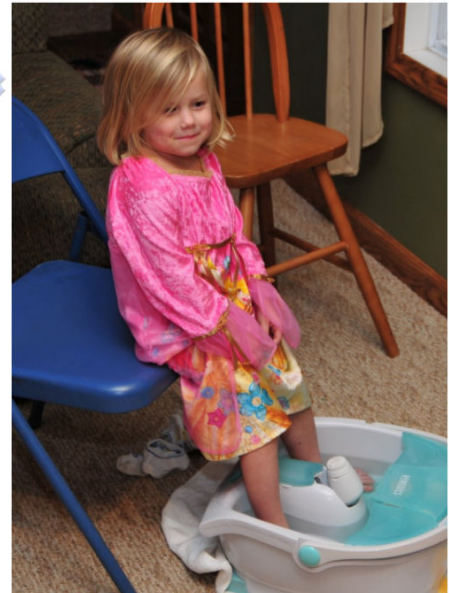
Frostbite

Each winter thousands of children and adults suffer cold related injuries. Frostbite being one of the most common first-aid concerns in the winter months. Frostbite occurs when skin tissue and blood vessels are damaged from exposure to cold temperatures. It most commonly affects the toes, fingers, earlobes, chin, cheeks and nose, body parts which are often left uncovered in cold temperatures. Frostbite can occur gradually or rapidly. The speed with which the process progresses depends upon how cold or windy the temperature conditions are and the duration of exposure to those conditions.

Prevention

Proper clothing for winter weather insulates from the cold, lets perspiration evaporate and provides protection against wind, rain and snow. Wear several layers of light, loose clothing that will trap air, yet provide adequate ventilation. This is better protection than one bulky or heavy covering. Best fabrics for the cold are wool, polyester substitutes and water-repellent materials (not waterproof, which holds in perspiration). Down coats and vests are warm; however, if down gets wet it is not an effectively warm fabric. Coverings for the head and neck are important. Hats, hoods, scarves, earmuffs and facemasks are good protection. Protect your feet and toes. Wear two pairs of socks - wool is best, or cotton socks with a pair of wool on top. Wear well-fitted boots that are high enough to cover the ankles. Hand coverings are vital. Mittens are warmer than gloves, but may limit what you can do with your fingers. Wear lightweight gloves under mittens so you'll still have protection if you need to take off your mittens to use your fingers. Be sure your clothing and boots are not tight. A decrease in blood flow makes it harder to keep the

body parts warm and increases the risk of frostbite. When in frostbite-causing conditions, dress appropriately, stay near adequate shelter, avoid alcohol and tobacco, and avoid remaining in the same position for long periods.



Frost bite doesn't take long to occur in low temps or with young children.

Treatment

The most logical step for treatment is to get out of the cold and out of the wind. Warm the frostbitten areas **slowly**, and start at the outer extremities and work your way in (toes to feet, fingers to hands, nose to cheeks) using warm breath or by tucking the hands or feet inside warm clothing by bare warm flesh (armpits and groin areas work best).

For broader areas of frostbite (when more than a toe or earlobe is involved) keep the frostbitten area elevated. Wrapping the injured area in warmed blankets. If possible immerse in warm water (104 to 108 degrees - similar in temperature to what you would bathe a new born baby in). **You should never rub or massage the frozen areas, doing so only rubs the ice crystals around on the delicate cell walls and causes further injury and damage.** Please note that immersion can become quite painful as the flesh begins to thaw out.

The best treatment for frost bite is PREVENTION!