

Frostbite Treatment



CALL 102 IF:

- A part of the person's body or skin is turning white and hard or black.
- The person has lack of feeling in the area.
- The person shows signs of hypothermia.

See Hypothermia Treatment.

1. Seek Medical Care Promptly

- See a doctor or go to a hospital emergency room.

2. Restore Warmth

Until you can see a doctor:

- Get the person to a warm place and remove any wet clothing.
- Unless absolutely necessary, the person should not walk on frostbitten toes or feet.
- Do not rewarm the skin until you can keep it warm. Warming and then re-exposing the frostbitten area to cold air can cause worse damage.
- Gently warm the area in warm water (not hot) or with wet heat until the skin appears red and warm.
- If no water is nearby, breathe on the area through cupped hands and hold it next to your body.
- Do not use direct heat from heating pads, radiator, or fires.
- Do not rub or massage the skin or break blisters.

3. Bandage the Area

- Loosely apply dry, sterile dressings.
- Put gauze or clean cotton balls between fingers or toes to keep them separated.

4. Follow Up

Once you get medical care, the next steps depend on the particular case.

- At the hospital, a doctor will rewarm the area.
- The doctor may administer medication for pain or intravenous fluids if the person is dehydrated.

- The doctor may also give a tetanus vaccine.
- The person may be hospitalized for a few days. In severe cases they may require amputation of the frostbitten area to avoid gangrene.