

How to Avoid Hypothermia

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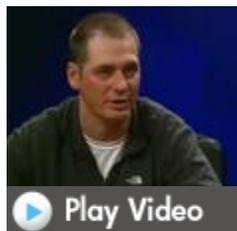
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How to Avoid Death from Hypothermia

Nearly 700 people in the [United States](#) die each year from hypothermia [source: [Mayo Clinic](#)]. Hypothermia is a silent killer because once your body temperature drops below 95 degrees, you

lose awareness of the cold and become disoriented because less oxygen reaches the brain. For that reason, take special precautions if you're alone in the cold. You may not be aware that your body is in peril.

Hypothermia Risk Groups

Infants and the elderly are the most at risk for developing hypothermia. Babies do not preserve body heat as well as adults, and the elderly may not have a high enough metabolism to stay warm. For both, it is important that their bedrooms not be too cold and that they are regularly monitored during the winter.

Groups of people should look after each other for the signs of hypothermia discussed in the previous section. If someone does appear hypothermic, there are a number of things that you can do to prevent that person from dying. In mild to moderate cases, the body can re-warm at a rate of 3.6 degrees per hour.

To start that warming process, first move into shelter. If there is nowhere to go indoors, at least move the person out of the wind, since wind can speed up hypothermia. Remove any wet clothing and replace them with dry blankets or even [newspaper](#).



[Getty Images](#)

Navy SEALs huddle for warmth during training. Removing clothes and sharing body heat can keep people warm.

For people with mild or moderate hypothermia, some [food](#) and beverages may be helpful. Warm, sweet liquids, such as diluted [gelatin](#) mix or hot [chocolate](#) will give the body quick energy boosts to help it produce heat. Proteins, fats and carbohydrates in the form of trail mix and granola can also stimulate the metabolism. Do not give them [alcohol](#) or [caffeine](#).

In more severe cases, getting a person out of any wet clothes and into a hypothermic wrap is essential. There should be several layers of insulation between the wrap and the cold ground. A **hypothermic wrap** covers every part of the body with as few open spaces as possible. A sleeping bag or multiple blankets can serve as hypothermic wraps, as long as the person is completely protected from the cold.

Additionally, extra clothing or blankets should be applied to the neck, groin, armpits and chest to protect major arteries. Sharing body heat by removing your clothes and getting into the wrap with the person may also prove beneficial, except in very severe cases. Also, do not apply heat

directly to the skin or give the person a massage because it can circulate the colder [blood](#) near the skin to the core, shocking the body.



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Hypothermic wraps cover people's bodies entirely while being insulated from cold ground.

[CPR](#) is another option if a hypothermic person's skin has turned blue, and you can't feel a pulse. But only do this if you are properly trained. If you stimulate the body too much with CPR, it can overexcite the [heart](#) and lead to cardiac arrest.

If possible, call [911](#) to get someone with severe hypothermia to a hospital. A doctor may hook up a person with hypothermia to an IV to put warming fluids directly into the body. He or she may also perform a procedure called **hemodialysis**, which takes the patient's blood out of the body, runs it through a warming mechanism, and returns it.

For more information on protecting against cold weather calamity, go to the links on the next page.