

HEALTH TIP: PREVENT FROSTBITE

By Dr. Dennis Lipton

Frostbite occurs when your body tissue freezes, resulting in death of cells and tissues. It is most common in the nose, ears, chin, fingers and toes. Fortunately, it is easily preventable with some planning and preparation.

1. Be aware of the wind chill and precipitation forecast. In the setting of extreme cold and high winds, frostbite can develop in a matter of minutes.
2. Be prepared with a hat, face and eye protection, mittens (better than gloves) and proper footwear (warm, water resistant).
3. Wear several layers of clothes. The innermost layer should be a wicking material such as polypropylene to wick moisture away from the skin. The next layer should be insulating material such as fleece or wool. The outermost layer can also include some fleece or wool, but most importantly should be moisture and wind resistant.
4. Stay dry! Change wet clothes or garments as soon as possible. Don't use moisturizers or emollients on exposed skin. Better to leave the skin dry and keep it covered.
5. Stay well-nourished and well-hydrated. Alcohol, smoking, malnutrition and dehydration increase risk of frostbite due to their adverse effects on circulation.

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