

Don't Get BITTEN

Wear Your Mittens



Red cheeks and tingling fingers should not be considered a normal part of time spent outside on a frigid, winter day. Instead, these could be the early stages of **FROSTBITE**: a real and potentially dangerous health issue that can lead to permanent nerve damage if not treated early.

Who is at a HIGHER RISK?



Anyone exposed to cold weather or water for an extended period of time



Diabetics who often lack sensitivity in their hands



Younger children who do not know how to discern colder temperatures



Those under the influence of drugs or alcohol, unaware of exposed extremities

How to PROTECT yourself



CREATE A COVERING

Frostbite most commonly occurs on fingers, hands, arms, legs, ears and feet. Attempt to cover as much exposed skin as possible by using scarves, mittens and hats. Utilize hand warmers that can be placed in pockets.



THE 15-MINUTE RULE

When playing outdoors, check children every 15 minutes for color and temperature of their skin. Replace wet mittens and secure hats and scarves. Ask specific questions like, "Do your fingers feel like pins and needles?"



TAKE BREAKS

Come indoors at the first sign of symptoms. Skin that becomes red, feels tingly and is very cold to the touch are all warning signs. Remove wet and cold layers and wrap affected areas of the body in warm blankets. Hands can be warmed with warm water, but be aware that if you experience pain from the water it could indicate frostbite is underway.



SEEK TIMELY HELP

A person can often recover from mild cases of frostbite, but those who have more severe cases may experience permanent damage and should be seen and treated by a healthcare professional. Serious cases can cause blistering, permanent numbness in the affected extremity and death of the skin, which may result in gangrene. In rare cases, the affected area may have to be amputated.

For more information on frostbite, visit premierphysiciannet.com/familyhealth.

SOURCES: Aleda Johnson, MD, Liberty Family Medicine.