For many families, winter is a season full of snow, warm beverages, and fun outdoor play. But freezing weather can also lead to hypothermia, a condition in which the body becomes exposed to cold temperatures, and when the body loses heat faster than producing it. When hypothermia sets in, a person’s organs cannot function normally, which can lead to organ failure or even death.

### Signs of Hypothermia

- Body temperature drops below 95°F
- Uncontrollable shivering
- Pallid, cold skin
- Loss of Consciousness
- Frostbite
- A Weak Pulse
- Clumsiness
- Confusion
- Slurred Speech
- Nausea
- Drowsiness

### Hypothermia in Infants and Toddlers

- Body temperature drops below 97.5 °F
- A weak cry
- Low energy levels
- Labored breathing
- Lethargy
- Weight loss
- Cold, red skin
- Unable to eat or drink
Hypothermia symptoms appear slowly and begin to reduce a person’s ability to think clearly. It’s a dangerous condition because most people don’t recognize the signs until it's too late. The very young and the elderly are most at risk because they cannot regulate their body temperatures.

**Causes of Hypothermia**

- Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures.
- Exposure to cold water (freezing lakes, ponds, or the ocean).
- Wearing wet clothing in cold temperatures.
- Living in a home with inadequate heat.
- Exposure to harsh and dangerous wind chills.
- Traumatic health conditions can leave the body unable to regulate body temperature.
- Young children ignore the cold and continue to play in freezing temperatures.
- Dehydration, and not consuming enough warm liquids in cold temperatures.
- The inadequate covering of the feet, hands, nose, and ears, which are the areas most susceptible to developing hypothermia.

**Hypothermia Prevention**

- **GET** plenty of rest before venturing outside.
- **STAY** hydrated and well-fed before going outside.
- **ALWAYS** play outside in groups, and never leave any friends behind.
- **CAREGIVERS** should frequently check on children and look for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- **MAKE** sure children take long breaks in between playing outside in cold weather.
- **DRESS** in warm layers, and choose weather-proof clothing.
- **DRESS** infants and young children in an extra layer for protection.
- **MAKE** sure children cover their heads, ears, hands, and feet when playing outside in cold temperatures.
- **CHOOSE** mittens over gloves.
- **KEEP** skin dry and avoid swimming or playing in cold bodies of water.