

WORKING TOGETHER  
FOR A HEALTHIER  
WORKFORCE

OFFICES IN  
WASHINGTON AND  
WAYNESBURG

# WHS OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024



## THIS ISSUE

- Happy Holidays
- Cold Related Illness

## IT'S WHAT WE DO

We are a full-service Occupational Medicine Clinic, offering a wide variety of services to meet your needs:

- Injury care
- Pre-employment physicals
- Return to work physicals
- DOT/school bus physicals
- OSHA surveillance physicals
- Audiogram hearing tests
- Respirator fit tests
- Drug tests (urine, hair, saliva)
- MRO services

## COMPANY PROFILE

We are always striving to improve communication with our clients. We create a company profile for each client we serve.

Please make sure to periodically contact us to ensure your information (contact names and phone numbers, fax numbers, emails, and workers compensation insurance info) is current.

## STAYING CONNECTED TO OUR BUSINESS CLIENTS

Welcome to the quarterly edition of the WHS Occupational Medicine Newsletter. In this publication we'll cover various occupational health topics, workplace topics, services we provide, as well as tips and suggestions to make your employees' visits as smooth as possible. Our goal is to be your partner in promoting a healthy and productive workforce.

Please feel free to share this information with others in your organization.

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Happy Holidays  
WASHINGTON HEALTH SYSTEM

The entire WHS Occupational Medicine team would like to wish you a very happy, safe and prosperous holiday season. We are honored that you have chosen us for all of your Occupational Medicine needs.

Happy Holidays from all of us!

# COLD RELATED ILLNESS

Cold related illness is a weather-related condition that occurs when the body is exposed to cold temperatures for a long period of time. Prolonged exposure to the cold can be dangerous and life-threatening. Preparation and prevention are key, especially for those whose job requires them to work outdoors in cold weather. Be mindful of the wind chill factor as well. This is what the air temperature feels like to human skin due to the combination of cold temperatures and wind blowing on exposed skin. The National Weather Service has a wind chill chart to use as a reference. Go to [weather.gov/safety/cold-wind-chill-chart](http://weather.gov/safety/cold-wind-chill-chart).

## Preventative Measures to Stay Safe Outdoors

- Dress in several layers of loose, warm clothing
  - Layering supplies better insulation
  - Tight clothes reduce blood circulation
- Outer garments: windproof and waterproof
- Undergarments: material that wicks moisture away from your skin
- Do not leave any areas of your skin exposed to the cold
- Hats, gloves/mittens, face cover/scarf, socks, boots – ideally insulated and waterproof
- Keep moving
- Stay hydrated. Avoid caffeine, tobacco and alcohol
- Change wet clothing at once
- Check skin for signs of frostbite every 10-20 minutes
- Drink warm liquids
- Get to warm areas during break periods



## BE AWARE OF THE WARNING SIGNS OF COLD RELATED ILLNESS!

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia or abnormally low body temperature can occur with prolonged exposure to cold temperatures. Your body begins to lose heat faster than it is produced. A body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making it difficult to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and will not be able to do anything about it. Symptoms can vary depending on how long you have been exposed to cold temperatures.

#### Early Symptoms

- Shivering
- Fatigue
- Loss of coordination
- Confusion and disorientation

#### Late Symptoms

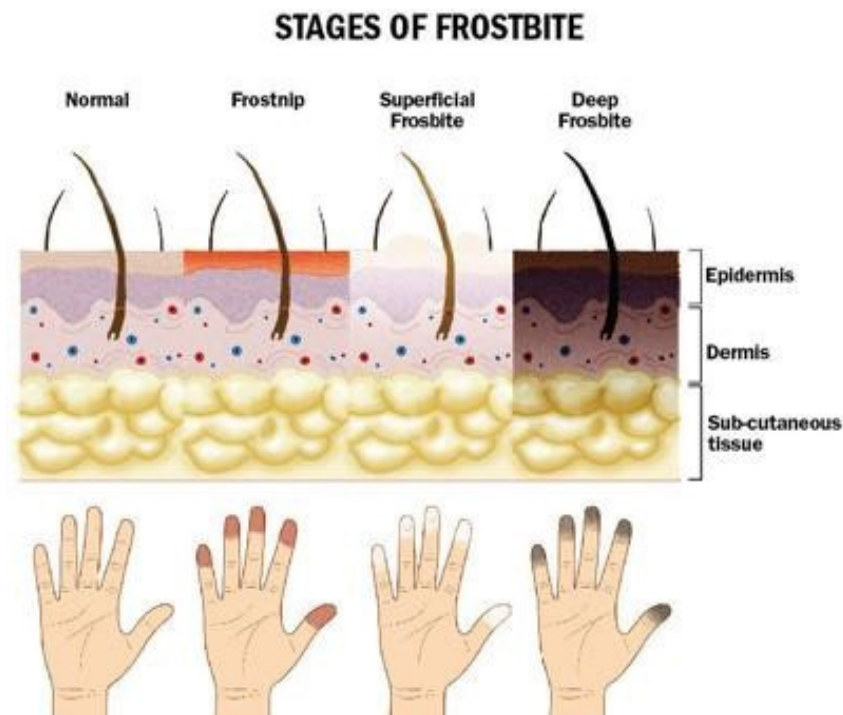
- No shivering
- Blue skin
- Dilated pupils
- Slowed pulse and breathing
- Loss of consciousness

### Hypothermia First Aid

- Seek medical attention as soon as possible
- If a person's temperature is below 95° get medical attention at once
- Get them to a warm room or shelter
- Remove any wet clothing
- Warm them under dry layers of blankets and clothing
- Warm the center of the body first – chest, neck, head and groin
- Warm beverages may help increase the body temperature – do not give alcoholic beverages
- If victim has no pulse, begin CPR

## Frostbite

Frostbite is, literally, frozen body tissue. It can occur within minutes of cold exposure. Frostbite can be categorized by the depth of tissue involvement (see stages of frostbite below). Frostbite causes loss of feeling and color in the affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes. Body tissues can be permanently damaged and severe cases can lead to amputation. Workers are at increased risk if they have reduced blood circulation, diabetes, heart/vascular issues, smoke, and most importantly, are not properly dressed.



Source: Mayo Clinic. Skin without cold damage is normal (1). Frostnip (2) is mild frostbite that irritates the skin, causing redness, prickling and a cold feeling followed by numbness. Frostnip doesn't permanently damage the skin and can be treated with first-aid measures. With superficial frostbite (3), your skin feels warm, a sign of serious skin involvement. A fluid-filled blister may appear 24 to 36 hours after rewarming the skin. With deep frostbite (4), you may experience numbness. Joints or muscles may no longer work. Large blisters form 24 to 48 hours after rewarming. Afterward, the area turns black and hard as the tissue dies.

## Frostbite First Aid

- Get into a warm room as soon as possible
- Remove wet clothes, wrap in warm, dry blankets
- Don't walk on frostbitten feet or toes, if possible, this could cause more damage
- Gently warm hands or feet by soaking in warm water (99°-108° F)
- Warm affected areas by using body heat; for example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers
- Do not rub or massage the frostbitten area, this may cause more damage
- Do not rewarm frostbitten skin with direct heat (e.g., heating pad, heat lamp, heat from a fireplace, radiator or stove). Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned
- Use OTC Advil, Motrin to reduce pain and inflammation



## Trench Foot

Trench foot is an injury of the feet resulting from prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions. Trench foot can occur at temperatures as high as 60° if the feet are constantly wet. Wet feet lose heat 25-times faster than dry feet. To prevent heat loss, the body constricts blood vessels to shut down circulation in the feet. Skin tissue begins to die because of lack of oxygen and nutrients and due to the build-up of toxic products.

### Symptoms

- Reddening of the skin
- Numbness
- Leg cramps
- Swelling
- Tingling pain
- Blisters or ulcers
- Bleeding under the skin
- Gangrene (foot may turn dark purple, blue, or gray)

### Trench Foot First Aid

- Remove shoes/boots and wet socks
- Dry their feet
- Avoid walking on feet, as this may cause tissue damage



**IF A COLD RELATED ILLNESS IS SUSPECTED, IT SHOULD BE EVALUATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WHS OCC MED IS YOUR PARTNER FOR A HEALTHIER WORKFORCE.**

Sources: CDC.gov/NIOSH, weather.gov, mayoclinic.org

## TIPS

To help reduce the time your employees spend in our clinic, download, and complete all necessary forms prior to the scheduled visit.

- DOT forms
- Pre-employment medical history
- OSHA Respiratory Questionnaire
- OSHA surveillance forms
- Audio history

Forms can be found on our website at [whsoccmed.org](http://whsoccmed.org). We can also provide you with a digital copy of these forms.



WASHINGTON HEALTH SYSTEM  
Occupational Medicine

95 Leonard Ave.  
Building 1, Suite 401,  
Washington, PA 15301

Phone: (724) 223-3528  
Fax: (724) 229-2401