

IT'S COLD OUT THERE

Soldiers in the far north have to protect themselves from extreme cold, and must know when to seek medical treatment—for themselves or for others who may be unable.



HYPOTHERMIA

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body will begin to lose heat more quickly than it can be produced. The body will attempt to compensate by burning through its energy stores, which leads to a lower body temperature. Symptoms of hypothermia can vary, depending on the severity.

Early symptoms include shivering, fatigue, loss of coordination, confusion and disorientation. Advanced symptoms may include blue skin, dilated pupils, slowed pulse and breathing, little or no shivering, and loss of consciousness. Hypothermia is a medical emergency requiring immediate attention.



FROSTBITE

Frostbite is an injury that occurs when your skin and tissues freeze. It most often affects the extremities, such as the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers and toes. Frostbite can permanently damage body tissues, and severe cases can lead to amputation.

Symptoms include reduced blood flow to hands and feet, numbness, tingling or stinging, aching, and bluish or pale, waxy skin. Seek medical care as soon as possible.



TRENCH FOOT

Also known as “immersion foot,” this is an injury of the feet caused by prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions. If the feet are consistently wet, it can occur at temperatures as high as 60 degrees Fahrenheit. To prevent heat loss through the wet skin, the body constricts blood vessels to shut down circulation in the feet. Tissue then begins to die from lack of oxygen and nutrients, and the buildup of toxins.

Symptoms include reddening of the skin, numbness, leg cramps, swelling, tingling pain, blisters or ulcers, bleeding under the skin or even gangrene. Seek medical care as soon as possible.



CHILBLAINS

Repeated exposure of skin to temperatures (from just above freezing to as high as 60 degrees Fahrenheit) can cause this type of damage to the small blood vessels in the skin. It is permanent and the resulting redness and itching—usually on cheeks, ears, fingers and toes—will return with further exposure.

Symptoms include redness, itching, possible blistering, inflammation and possible ulceration in severe cases. Seek medical care for severe or persistent symptoms.

