

Frostbite Treatment Protocol

Regions Hospital Burn Center

St. Paul, MN

1-800-922-BURN (2876)

Care of Cold Injuries

Emergency Room Care of Cold Injury

- Treat “core” hypothermia
 - Use local treatment protocols for rewarming
- Avoid limb rewarming unless it can be done definitively (to prevent refreezing)
- Preserve tissue
 - Rapid rewarming
 - Lytic therapy for 2-3° injury for limb salvage
- Protect affected body part from mechanical trauma
- Call The Burn Center with any questions
1-800-922-BURN (2876)

Transfer to The Burn Center at Regions Hospital within 12 hours of exposure offers the best chance of preserving tissue and digits for a severely frostbitten limb.

Frostbitten Tissue Rewarming Guidelines

Correct systemic hypothermia first, then rewarm frostbitten extremities.

- Immersion in warm water (104-108° F or 40-42° C)
- Flushing indicates perfusion (and time to STOP)
- Anticipate pain with reperfusion (narcotics)
- During rewarming keep extremity level to combat edema formation

After Rewarming

- Dressings
 - Xeroform (Vaseline gauze to blisters/open areas)
 - Avoid Silvadene (maceration)
 - Avoid constrictive wraps/footwear etc.
- Elevate affected body part
- Lamb’s wool between digits
- Avoid/limit further cold exposure (temperature restrictions)
- Medications:
 - Ibuprofen 400-600mg TID for 1 week (10mg/kg TID for kids)
 - Analgesia
 - Strictly prohibit nicotine
- Tetanus per ACS guidelines
- Prophylactic antibiotics not indicated

Degree of Injury

(Determined after rewarming)

- 1°/Superficial-hyperemia +/- edema without blisters
 - Outpatient management typical
- 2°/Partial-hyperemia and blisters
 - Hospital admission
 - No ambulation until pedal edema has resolved
 - Consider burn surgeon consult
(1-800-922-BURN)
- 3°/Full Thickness-pale, mottled, or proximal hemorrhagic blisters
 - Amputations are likely
 - Thrombolytic therapy can prevent amputations
 - Goal to initiation is < 12-24h
 - Transfer to Regions Hospital Burn Center

 **Regions Hospital**
The Burn Center

For transfers or consults: **1-800-922-BURN (2876)**
Burn Surgeons are available 24/7
640 Jackson Street St. Paul, MN 55101
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