



PITTSFIELD BOARD OF HEALTH

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What is Hypothermia?

Hypothermia is a serious, potentially life-threatening condition occurring when the body temperature drops below 95 degrees.

When does Hypothermia occur?

Most Hypothermia cases occur commonly outdoors in sub-freezing weather. It can also occur inside a home when there is no heat available or the thermostat is turned down too low.

What are the warning signs?

Symptoms include confusion, memory loss, drowsiness, exhaustion, slurred speech and fumbling hands. Affects the brain, leaving the person unable to think clearly and move easily. Body becomes too cold to function normally. Those affected may not be aware of their condition or be able to do something about it.

Who is at risk?

The elderly, young children, and adults. People with certain medical conditions such as heart disease, respiratory ailments, circulatory problems, hypothyroidism, depression, diabetes and mental illness. Those under the influence of alcohol; infants and children. Certain medications increase the risk of hypothermia. Speak with your doctor about special precautions needed to avoid hypothermia.

How can Hypothermia be prevented?

Set the thermostat at 70°F (While energy conservation is important, setting the thermostat any lower may jeopardize your health. Prolonged exposure to lower temperatures, even in the 60's, increases the risk of hypothermia). Avoid alcohol. Eat a well-balanced diet. Walk or exercise as much as your doctor allows (This will help make it easier to keep your body warm. Use a lap blanket and wear a cap. Be careful when using supplemental heating such as a wood stove, fireplace or space heater (Make certain fuel-burning heaters are properly vented to the outside and avoid the use of extension cords with electrical space heaters

How is Hypothermia treated?

If you suspect someone is suffering from hypothermia, call 911 immediately (Time is very important). Cover the person with blankets and put a cap or towel on their head until help arrives. Keep the person immobile and quiet with their feet slightly elevated. If the person is conscious and alert, give them small quantities of warm liquids or food. If the person is not breathing and has no pulse, cardiopulmonary resuscitation should be attempted until paramedics arrive.