



# Cold Exposure

## Environmental

### CRITERIA

Patient exposed to extreme environmental conditions with symptoms that might include, but are not limited to:

- CNS depression
- Cardiac dysrhythmias
- Abnormal vital signs
- Suspect hypothermia in:
  - High-risk patients: very young or old patients, immobilized patients (e.g. prolonged entrapment), alcohol use, trauma/significant burns
  - High-risk environment: cold, windy environments, acute immersion incident

### PROTOCOL

EMR	Follow <i>General – Universal Patient Care/Initial Patient Contact Protocol</i> . Use warmed and humidified O <sub>2</sub> if available.	EMR
EMR	Place patient in a warm environment and prevent further heat loss	EMR
EMR	Remove all wet clothing and replace with warm blankets. Handle the patient gently and avoid excessive movement (risk of cardiac arrest)	EMR
EMR	In the event of cardiac arrest, make persistent attempts at resuscitation for victims of prolonged cold exposure. Perform CPR and continuous warming procedures.	EMR
EMT	Transport patient immediately with resuscitation efforts continued en route	EMT
<b>Localized Cold Injury</b>		
EMR	Follow <i>General – Universal Patient Care/Initial Patient Contact Protocol</i> .	EMR
EMR	Apply loose, sterile dressings to affected part	EMR

### PEARLS

- 🔔 Hypothermia patients are fragile: Rough handling, IV insertion, intubation, etc. might cause VF that is refractory to defibrillation and antiarrhythmic agents- use AHA guidelines for hypothermic arrest.
- 🔔 **DO NOT** place heat packs, hot water bottles, IV bags, or other heat-retaining devices directly on skin
- 🔔 Contact Medical Control prior to use of AED
- 🔔 *If cardiac arrest occurs*, start CPR. Do not delay transport waiting for ALS
- 🔔 *If the patient is alert and responsive*, use active external rewarming with heat packs, warm blankets, etc
- 🔔 Assess pulse and respiratory rate for at least 60 seconds.
- 🔔 *In Localized injuries DO NOT:*
  - Allow patient to use the affected part
  - Rub the affected part
  - Expose the part to direct dry heat
  - Immerse the part in snow or hot water
  - Attempt to debride blisters
- 🔔 Remove jewelry and constricting items
- 🔔 During cardiac arrest, medications should be spaced at longer intervals