

Cold - Induced Conditions

Signs & Symptoms

Early warning signs may include:

- Feeling cold
- Shivering
- Clumsiness and slurred speech
- Apathy and irrational behaviour

As body temperature drops:

- Shivering usually ceases
- Pulse may be difficult to find
- Heart rate may slow
- Level of consciousness continues to decline

At around 30°C body temperature:

- Unconsciousness is likely
- Heart rhythm is likely to change
- As the body temperature fall further the heart may arrest, resulting in death

Management of Hypothermia

The aim is to stabilise core temperature rather than attempt rapid rewarming:

1. Follow DRSABCD.
2. Remove the casualty to a warm, dry place.
3. Protect the casualty and yourself from wind, rain, sleet, cold, wet ground.
4. Lie the casualty down and handle as gently as possible and avoid excess activity or movement.
5. Remove wet clothing and warm the casualty by placing between blankets, in a sleeping bag, or wrap in a thermal/space blanket or similar, and cover the head to maintain body heat.

Provide warmth to the casualty aiming to stabilise core temperature rather than attempt rapid rewarming.

- Hot water bottles, heat packs may be applied to the casualty's neck, armpits and groin
- Give the casualty warm drinks if conscious; no alcohol
- DO NOT use radiant heat such as fire or electric heater
- DO NOT rub affected areas