

Subject: Treatment - Environmental Emergencies – ALL Providers
Heat and Cold Related Treatment Policy

I. PURPOSE

Provide standardized recognition and treatment of heat- and cold-related environmental emergencies.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. HEAT-RELATED EMERGENCIES

1. Heat Cramps: Painful muscle spasms due to electrolyte imbalance.
2. Heat Exhaustion: Moderate illness with dehydration, weakness, diaphoresis, normal or mildly elevated temperature.
3. Heat Stroke: Life-threatening condition with altered mental status and core temperature typically $\geq 104^{\circ}\text{F}$ (40°C).
4. Exertional Heat Illness: Heat illness occurring during physical activity may progress rapidly to heat stroke.

B. COLD-RELATED EMERGENCIES

1. Hypothermia (Mild): Core temperature $90\text{--}95^{\circ}\text{F}$ with shivering and alert mental status.
2. Hypothermia (Moderate): Core temperature $82\text{--}90^{\circ}\text{F}$ with altered mental status and decreased shivering.
3. Hypothermia (Severe): Core temperature $<82^{\circ}\text{F}$ with unconsciousness and high risk of cardiac arrest.
4. Frostbite: Freezing of tissue, typically affecting extremities.
5. Non-Freezing Cold Injury: Tissue damage without freezing (e.g., trench foot).

III. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

- A. Assess airway, breathing, circulation.
- B. Evaluate mental status.
- C. Obtain temperature if available.
- D. Determine duration and type of exposure.
- E. Assess for dehydration, trauma, or comorbidities.

IV. HEAT-RELATED EMERGENCIES

BLS TREATMENT

- A. Remove from heat source.
- B. Initiate rapid cooling (shade, cooling packs, misting/fanning).
- C. Administer oxygen if indicated.

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- D. Oral fluids if alert and not vomiting.
- E. Position supine.
- F. Rapid transport for altered mental status or suspected heat stroke.

ALS TREATMENT

- A. All BLS care.
- B. IV/IO access.
- C. Administer isotonic fluids.
- D. Cardiac monitoring.
- E. Advanced airway if needed.
- F. Consider sedation for severe agitation.
- G. Continuous temperature monitoring.

V. COLD-RELATED EMERGENCIES

BLS TREATMENT

- A. Remove from cold environment.
- B. Handle gently to avoid arrhythmias.
- C. Remove wet clothing.
- D. Passive rewarming with blankets.
- E. Administer oxygen.
- F. Do not massage or rub extremities.

ALS TREATMENT

- A. All BLS care.
- B. IV/IO access.
- C. Administer warmed IV fluids if available.
- D. Cardiac monitoring.
- E. Advanced airway if needed.
- F. Active core rewarming if available.
- G. Minimize patient movement.

VI. TRANSPORT

- A. Transport to closest appropriate facility.
- B. Rapid transport for severe heat stroke or hypothermia.
- C. Provide early notification.

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VII. DOCUMENTATION

- A. Environmental conditions.
- B. Duration of exposure.
- C. Patient temperature if available.
- D. Mental status changes.
- E. Treatments provided.

VIII. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TRIGGERS

- A. Failure to initiate cooling or rewarming.
- B. Delayed recognition of heat stroke or severe hypothermia.
- C. Delayed transport.
- D. Incomplete documentation.