

Stages of Frostbite

Normal Skin

Healthy skin without frostbite damage.

Frostnip

Frostnip, also known as first-degree frostbite, is mild and does not cause permanent damage. It is temporary and can be treated at home.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Redness
- Numbness
- Prickling sensation

Rewarm the skin in room temperature air or by soaking the affected area in warm water for 15-30 minutes. Avoid using heat sources like stoves and heating pads as they can lead to burns. As the skin rewarms, pain and tingling may be experienced.

If symptoms worsen, seek medical attention at an emergency room or urgent care centre.

Superficial Frostbite

Superficial frostbite is also known as second-degree frostbite.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Burning or stinging sensation
- Skin can feel firm, waxy, and/or frozen
- Pale fluid-filled blisters may appear up to 36 hours after rewarming the skin

Superficial frostbite can be treated initially with home remedies by caring for the affected area. To prevent permanent damage, warm the affected area in room temperature air or by soaking the affected area in warm water for 15-30 minutes.

If symptoms do not improve, seek medical attention at an emergency room or urgent care centre.

Deep Frostbite

Deep frostbite, also known as third-degree frostbite, is the most severe form of frostbite. It affects all layers of the skin and the tissues below.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Numbness/loss of sensation
- Skin can turn blue, grey, and/or black
- Large blisters can form 24-48 hours after rewarming

Deep frostbite requires immediate medical attention. Seek medical attention at an emergency room or urgent care centre, as permanent tissue death can occur at this stage and there may be a risk of amputation.

Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number if necessary.

