

# Hypothermia and Frostbite Handout

Nursing 202: Advanced Concepts of Nursing

## Hypothermia

- Lowering of core body temperature to less < than 35C
- Heat loss > Heat production

## Mild Hypothermia – 32.2C-35C (90-95F)

- Alert, the mental status may be altered
- s/s- ataxia, slowed response to stimuli, dysarthria.

## Moderate Hypothermia – 28C-32.2C (82.4-90F)

- Decreased LOC, respirations, pulse, and cardiac output
- Increased risk v- tach
- Shivering ceased

## Severe Hypothermia – 23.8-28C (75-82.4F)

- Absence reflexes and pain response
- Decreased cerebral blood flow

**Frostbite** – tissue damage after exposure to freezing temperatures.

- Superficial vs Deep Frostbite
- 4 phases –Pre- freeze, freeze and thaw, vascular stasis, ischemic phase

## On scene treatment

- ABCS & CPR for at least 5 minutes
- removing wet clothing if applicable and external passive rewarming (insulation or blankets)
- Avoid rubbing frostbitten areas r/f further tissue trauma
- Resuscitate until temp >30C

## ED Treatment

- Slow and controlled rewarming—trunk first then extremities r/f core temp after drop
- Place affected extremities in warm water for 30 minutes
- Tetanus prophylaxis
- Anticoagulation within 24hrs

## Ed Nurse Role

- Cardiac monitoring (v-fib or a fib)
- Monitor Vitals (HR, BP, Temp) and electrolytes -- K+
- Isotonic fluid resuscitation (hypotension)
- Heating pads, warmed fluids, warmed blankets
- Stabilized BEFORE Rewarming frostbitten areas

