

Southern Illinois Regional EMS System

EE-9 COLD EMERGENCIES/FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA

ALS/ILS:

1. FROSTBITE
 - 1.1. Initial medical care.
 - 1.2. Move patient to a warm environment ASAP and prevent re-exposure.
 - 1.3. Rapidly rewarm frozen areas with hands or hot packs wrapped in a towel.
 - 1.3.1. DO NOT RUB.
 - 1.3.2. DO NOT thaw if there is a chance of refreezing.
 - 1.4. Do not let the patient ambulate if the lower extremities are affected.
 - 1.5. Handle skin like a burn. Protect with light, dry, sterile dressings. Do not let affected skin surfaces rub together.

2. SYSTEMIC HYPOTHERMIA: (conscious or altered sensorium, shivering)
 - 2.1. Access ABC's
 - 2.2. Monitor cardiac rhythm
 - 2.3. Initiate IV of NS TKO (warm fluids if available).
 - 2.4. Notify medical control
 - 2.5. Rewarm patient
 - 2.5.1 Place the patient in a warm environment.
 - 2.5.1.1 Remove wet clothing when indicated.
 - 2.5.2. Apply hot packs wrapped in towels to axilla, groin, neck, and thorax.
 - 2.5.3. Wrap patient in blankets.
 - 2.5.4. Maintain horizontal position.
 - 2.5.5. Avoid rough movement.
 - 2.6. Transport ASAP

3. SEVERE HYPOTHERMIA: (patient may appear uncoordinated with poor muscle control or stiff, simulating rigor mortis. There will be no shivering. Sensorium is confused, withdrawn, disoriented or comatose)
 - 3.1. Secure ABC's.
 - 3.2. Cardiac Monitor - Pulselessness or profound bradycardia must be confirmed for 30-60 seconds.
 - 3.3. Begin CPR if pulseless.
 - 3.4. Initiate IV of NS at TKO (warm fluids if available).
 - 3.5. Defibrillate V-tach/V-fib up to one time only, until core temp. rises above 86 degrees.
 - 3.6. Notify medical control.
 - 3.7. DO NOT INITIATE ANY DRUG THERAPY unless confirmed rectal temperature obtained. If temperature equal to or above 86°, initiate resuscitation medications as indicated but at longer intervals. Repeat defibrillation as temperature rises.
 - 3.8. If temperature not confirmed, continue CPR.
 - 3.9. Rewarm patient as stated above.
 - 3.10. Rapid Transport for core rewarming. Handle patient very gently to avoid precipitating arrhythmia.

Southern Illinois Regional EMS System

EE-9 COLD EMERGENCIES / FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA (continued)

BLS Management:

1. Follow same general principles as above.
2. AED approved - follow specific SOP.

***Note**

Do not attempt to thaw if there is a chance of refreezing. Example: Out in a remote area with long transfer time to an ambulance.