

**San Joaquin County  
Emergency Medical Services Agency**



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## **BLS Hypothermia – Frostbite**

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**AUTHORITY:** Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Sections 1797.60, 1797.80, 1797.197, 1797.197a, 1797.204, 1797.220, 1798; California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Chapter 2, Sections 100062, 100063, 100064

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**INFORMATION NEEDED:**

Length and history of exposure.

Air temperature, water temperature, wind velocity, was patient wet or dry.

History and time of mental status changes.

Medical history: trauma, alcohol consumption, medications, pre-existing medical problems.

**OBJECTIVE FINDINGS:**

Altered mental status.

Patient's body temperature.

Exposure to cold environment.

Evidence of local cold injury: blanching, red or wax looking skin especially ears, nose and fingers, burning or numbness in effected areas.

**TREATMENT:**

1. Primary Survey – ensure ABC's.
2. Consider the need for spinal motion restrictions.
3. Gently move patient to warm environment.
4. Remove wet clothing and cover with warm blankets.
5. Heat packs with less than 110° F may be applied to patient's groin/axillary for warmth (Do Not apply chemical heat packs directly to skin, wrap in towel or clean dry cloth).
6. Monitor SpO2.
7. Administer oxygen for shortness of breath or signs of hypoxia: Oxygen 10-15 L/min via non-rebreathing mask. Patients with ineffective respirations: support ventilations with BVM and airway.
8. Secondary Survey and Routine Medical Care.
9. Do Not Attempt to thaw out frost bitten areas or apply heat packs to frostbite sites.
10. Notes: Move patients gently, excessive movement has been known to cause patients with severe hypothermia to suffer sudden cardiac arrest.

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Effective: April 1, 2020

Supersedes: July 1, 2007

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Approved: Signature on file  
Medical Director

Signature on file  
EMS Administrator