

THE FROSTBYTE

A Community Resource
Winter 2025



This resource was compiled by the **Sick & Tired Collective** with special support and guidance from harm reduction outreach workers in South Minneapolis and Duluth. Its format and content were largely inspired by [Southside Harm Reduction's XYLA-ZINE](#). Check it out! All medical information was acquired from UpToDate and other peer reviewed sources.

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INTRODUCTION



This byte-sized resource hopes to center wisdom & support that community has built over generations to care for each other when outside in the cold in addition to highlighting medical tips & tricks that are often gate-kept by corporate minded hospitals. Medical spaces are often unsafe for folks who use drugs and/or live outside. It is the responsibility of those working in healthcare to change this and this zine seeks to empower folks in the meantime.

We assert that frostbite is a socially driven illness, caused by inhumane housing and policing policies rather than personal decisions. We believe frostbite, which currently affects thousands of Minnesotans annually, could be drastically reduced if politicians would **#stopthesweeps**. Encampment sweeps leave our community more vulnerable to exposure in a system that does not provide adequate housing.

Minneapolis & Hennepin County currently do not provide a single overnight warming center.

Despite this, we remain inspired by folks that wake up everyday to take care of our community. Many of the folks doing the most work are those facing the cold themselves.

We honor those who have lost digits, lives, and family members to the cold amidst our society's greed. May their memory and their sacrifice be a blessing; may we recommit ourselves to ending this preventable societal illness.

With love and healing,
The Sick & Tired Collective



THE BASICS

Frostbite is an injury that occurs in stages when the body is exposed to freezing temperatures.

Your body protects itself by decreasing blood flow to your skin and limbs to keep your internal organs warm.

The decrease in blood flow to those areas (like your fingers, toes, nose, and ears) can cause them to freeze.

Stage 1: Frostnip

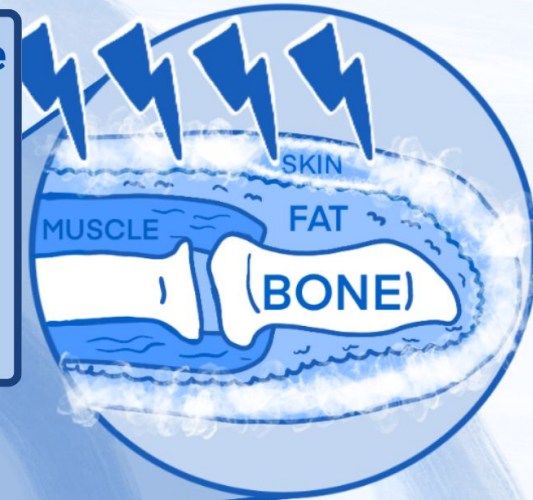
The earliest, mildest form of cold injury. The skin is red, numb, waxy, and tingly but remains intact

What to do: REWARM

Stage 2: Partial Frostbite

Skin and tissue freeze, but often can be saved. The skin may change color, feel hard, and may even feel warm. Rewarming is painful and blisters can form.

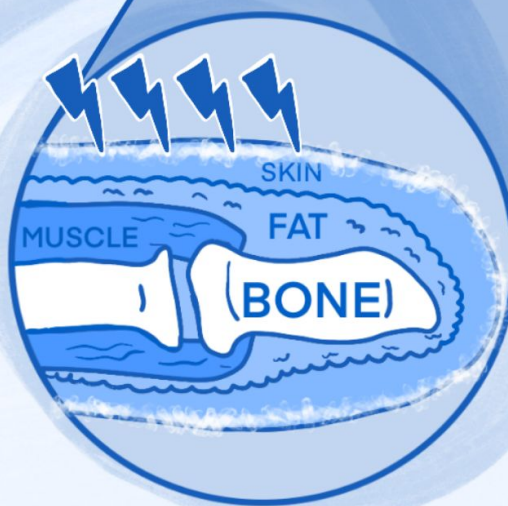
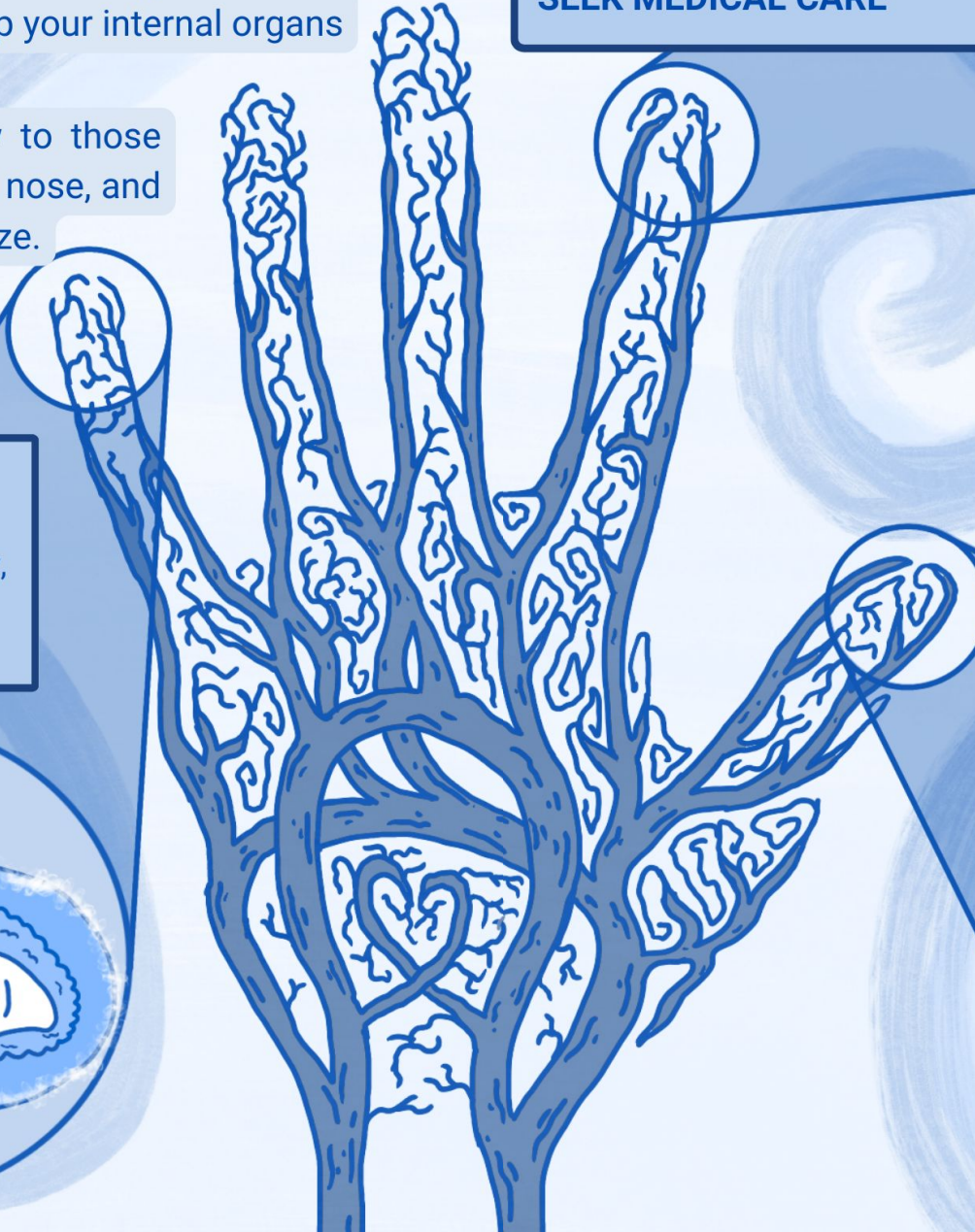
SEEK MEDICAL CARE



Stage 3: Deep Frostbite

Severe injury damages deep structures like tendon, muscle, nerve, and bone. The skin will be hard, pale, and numb. When the tissue rewarms, it will not be able to heal and may become infected. Amputation may be needed

CALL 911



SELF CARE

Rewarm. Rewarm. Rewarm.

This is most important. Find a safe place to warm up.

- **Soak injured area in warm water** until frozen area is soft to touch.
 - Don't use **hot** water or fire.
 - If no warm water, warm up by putting injured area under armpits or between your legs.
- **Gently Dry area completely**, as extra moisture can cause infection and avoid refreezing.
 - Avoid warming in water if you will be exposed to cold before drying completely.
- **Repeat rewarming for 30 minutes daily for first 2 weeks**
 - Perform wound care each time. This helps keep wound clean and promotes healing.



HOT TIPS

- **Remove rings or other tight clothing/jewelry**
 - These may decrease blood flow to injured area.
- **Gentle movements** around injured area help increase healing blood flow.
- **Treat Pain.** Regaining feeling as you rewarm is painful.
 - **Aspirin or Ibuprofen** can help with pain and also help increase blood flow to promote healing.
- **Prevent Refreezing**
 - Previous frostbite areas have very high risk of new, even more severe cold injuries
- **Avoid using alone** in cold temperatures
 - Call Never Use Alone hotline: [877-696-1996](tel:877-696-1996)

WOUND CARE

YOU are the expert at healing

The best wound care is done daily. Free supply kits are available through Southside Harm Reduction, NACC, and Mobile Health Initiative.

Try these steps on your own::

1) **Keep area clean and warm.**

Use tap or bottled water, and soap if available.



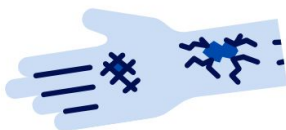
2) **Apply Vaseline or bacitracin or Aloe-based product daily** to help prevent infection and provide a protective layer. Dab, don't rub!

3) **Protect injured area** with lightly wrapped, **non-adhesive, clean bandages.**



4) **Don't wrap too tight!** This reduces blood flow needed to heal

5) **Try not to pop blisters** or remove any skin manually



6) Use **non-adhesive bandages** to separate toes or fingers if injured

Want Extra Support with Wound Care?

A helping hand is amazing, especially in hard to reach spots. While frostbite treatment is most successful in the first 24 hours, **it is never too late to access additional support.** Here are some local health clinics that strive to be grounded in harm reduction practices:

Native American Community Clinic
1213 Franklin Ave - (612) 872-8086

Healthcare for the Homeless
(612) 348-5553

CUHCC Clinic
2001 Bloomington Ave - (612) 348-5553

When to go to the ER or Call 9-1-1

- Skin is **black, blue, green, white, or waxy**
- **Numbness** doesn't go away with rewarming
- Wound starts developing **pus or large blisters**
- You develop **fevers or chills**
- You are **shivering uncontrollably**
- If you **can't move injured area**

MEDICAL OPTIONS

If you choose to seek medical care, here are things you might expect or request at a hospital to treat frostbite properly:

- **Rewarm.** They should rewarm your skin, often in water
- **Pain Management.** Ibuprofen or Aspirin which also help to increase blood flow to your injury.
- **Blood Tests & Scans.** These help evaluate the severity of frostbite and the necessary treatments
- **Tetanus vaccine.** A tetanus vaccine prevents serious infection that causes painful spasms and paralysis.
- **Antibiotics.** To treat infections caused by frostbite.
- **Blood Thinners.** These help prevent the areas around your injury from dying and help recover blood flow.
- **Hospitalization.** In severe injuries, you may stay for multiple days in the hospital for recovery
- **Surgery.** may be recommended to remove body parts that are severely damaged to prevent life-threatening infections.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AT THE HOSPITAL

Here are a few tips to keep you and your loved ones safe:

- **Ask Questions.** You have a right to know what treatments are being done, by whom, and why.
- **Honor your autonomy.** You can refuse treatment or leave at anytime. Request outpatient options to complete your treatment outside the hospital if it's time to go.
- **Engage Community.** Bring a trusted friend. Southside and NACC outreach workers can serve as advocates if there is nobody available to accompany you.
- **Believe your body.** Pain and withdrawal symptoms are real and should be treated appropriately. Speak up if you experience changes or new symptoms.
- **Request to change providers** if you are feeling unheard, disrespected, or abused.
- **Ask to prolong your stay if needed.** Speak up if you do not feel safe leaving the hospital.
- **Enforce Privacy.** Your info cannot be shared without your consent. You can ask for cops to leave the room during conversations with providers if you are in custody.

GET WARM, STAY WARM

Frostbite can happen in minutes during **windy and cold conditions.**

Get Warm Gear

Southside Harm Reduction
(612) 615-9725

Red Door Closet
525 Portland Ave

GMCC Closet
Friday 11am-3pm
1100 E Lake St

Sabathani Closet
M-W 1230-2pm
310 East 38th St

People's Closet
35th & Chicago

Supply Depot
IG: [sanctuarysupplydepot](#)

Get Inside, Call for Help

Daytime
Healthcare for the Homeless
(612) 348-5553

Hennepin Libraries
(Daytime Hours)

Hennepin Gov. Center (6am-6pm)
300 South 6th St

Nighttime
KOLA
(7pm-7am)
1600 East 19th St

Hennepin Shelter Hotline
(612) 204-8200

Ramsey Overnight Shelter Hotline
(9pm-7am)
(651)-266-1050

Visit www.hennepin.us/STAYWARM for up to date lists of resources.



SHARE THE WARMTH

City provided resources are tragically limited. Community members have responded with incredible mutual aid and outreach work. If you are able, you can support this work with cash, food or clothing donations. **If donating clothing or food, please check first if folks are accepting items and what items they need.**

You can also distribute items such as **cash**, hand warmers, gloves, hats, water, snacks, blankets, water, and clothes directly to folks, **with their permission**

Solidarity! Not Charity.

Hook up these neighbors and orgs working to help keep us safe!!!!

Camp Nenookaasi
IG: [@campnenookaasi](#)
linktr.ee/campnenookaasi

Sanctuary Supply Depot
IG: [@sanctuarysupplydepot](#)
linktr.ee/sanctuarysupplydepot

Southside Harm Reduction
IG: [@southsideharmreduction](#)
linktr.ee/SouthsideHarmReduction

Autonomous Yurt Union
IG: [@ayu_mpls](#)
linktr.ee/AYUmpls

Help Buy Propane
Venmo [@propanempls](#)

