

Frostbite Care at Home

You have had a **frostbite injury**. Frostbite is caused when your skin and the tissue below your skin freezes.

What can I expect after discharge?

- You may have pain after discharge home. Take medications as instructed. Ibuprofen is best if your health care provider has instructed you to use it. Do not drive if taking narcotic medications.
- You may have numbness after discharge home. The numbness may be long term. Protect these areas from injury.
- If you had injuries to your fingers or toes, your nails may not grow back normally.

How will I care for myself at home?

Nutrition

- Eating a healthy, well balanced diet will help your wounds heal faster. Make sure you eat nutritious foods high in protein and calories. These include meat, fish, eggs, cheese, peanut butter, beans, ice cream and milk shakes.
- Drink lots of water. It is important to have plenty of fluids when you have a burn.

As your wounds heal, your nutritional needs will eventually return to normal.

Wound Care

- Protect your open wounds from injury and infection by following your wound care plan as prescribed by your Trauma Burn healthcare provider.
- Elevate your injuries above your heart to improve circulation and reduce swelling.
- Do not break blisters that may form.

Skin Care

You may feel increased sensitivity to cold. You are at higher risk of developing frostbite again. These risks are increased if you have diabetes or peripheral vascular disease, or take beta blockers. Early signs of frostbite include red or pale skin, prickly sensations, and numbness.

Follow these action steps to protect yourself from further frostbite injury:

1. Avoid icepacks, heating pads, electric blankets or any extreme heat or cold.
2. Limit the amount of time spent outside in cold or windy weather
3. Dress in loose, warm layers.
4. Change out of wet clothes immediately.
5. Wear a hat, scarf, mittens and thick socks.
6. Make sure that your feet, hands, head and face are covered.
7. Do not drink alcohol or smoke before going outside.

Exercise

- Use your injured areas as normally as possible during the day. This will help prevent stiffness and prevent problems.
- Follow your prescribed physical therapy and occupational therapy plans. These may include home exercises.

Splints

- You might have received splints to wear. Wear them as directed. Wash them with lukewarm water and mild soap as needed. Dry thoroughly.
- If you received pressure relief shoes, wear them for walking. Bring them to the clinic appointments.
- Call the clinic if you have problems with your splints.

When should I call the Clinic?

Call the Trauma Burn Clinic (734) 936-5738 if you have any of the following:

- Fever higher than 101.5 degrees
- Green , discolored, or excess drainage
- Increased pain
- New or increased redness around the wound
- Increased swelling, or other changes in wound appearance
- Foul smell from wounds
- New bleeding

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