

## Slow and Gentle Are Best in Treating Hypothermia

From VOA Learning English, this is the Health Report in Special English.

Last week, we talked about ways to avoid cold-weather injuries. This week, we are going to talk about emergency treatment of hypothermia.

Hypothermia can be mild, moderate or severe. Mild hypothermia is something that most people have experienced if they live in cold climates. You feel so cold that your body starts to shake -- not very much, but uncontrollably.



The treatment for mild hypothermia starts with getting out of the cold and, if necessary, changing into dry clothes. Drinking warm, non-alcoholic liquids and eating something sugary can stop the shivering.

Taking a warm bath or sitting by a fire or doing some exercise can also help the body warm up. These are all common sense treatments.

But treatment needs change when people enter the moderate or severe stages of hypothermia. In that situation, their body temperature drops below 35 degrees Celsius. They lose the ability to think clearly. Their muscles become stiff. They might bump into things or fall over objects.

We got advice from a park ranger experienced in search-and-rescue for the National Park Service. She explained that rescuers will first try to prevent additional heat loss. They will place extra covering around the chest, head and neck of hypothermia victims to keep them warm.

It is important to work fast to get people out of the cold. Hypothermia victims need medical help as soon as possible. But it is equally important to move them slowly and gently.

Any rough or sudden movement can force cold blood from the arms, legs and hands deep into the warmer middle of the body. The sudden flow of cold blood can create shock, a serious condition. It can also cause a dangerously abnormal heartbeat.

The process of “rewarming” a person needs to be done slowly, in a hospital

setting. Members of search-and-rescue teams have a saying, that victims are not dead until they are warm and dead.

An extremely low body temperature can cause the heart to beat so slowly that a pulse may be difficult to find. In other words, a person who is suffering from the effects of severe cold may seem dead, but still be alive.