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WITH COLD WINTER MONTHS, COMES THE DANGER OF FROSTBITE

By Jackie Canelas

Being located in the heart of the White Mountains, we face long, cold winters. Although we are fortunate to have many wonderful outdoor activities at our doorstep, we must also respect Mother Nature and be aware of the dangers that we may face if not properly prepared when embracing outdoor activities. Frostbite is one of those dangers and is characterized as a cold-related injury which causes freezing of tissue. When exposed to very cold temperatures, skin and underlying tissues may freeze, resulting in frostbite. The areas most likely to be affected by frostbite are your hands, feet, nose and ears.

If your fingers, ears or other areas get frostbite:

- **Get out of the cold.**
- **Warm your hands** by tucking them under your arms. If your nose, ears or face is frostbitten, warm the area by covering it with dry, gloved hands.
- **Don't rub the affected area.** Never rub snow on frostbitten skin.
- **Don't walk on frostbitten feet or toes if possible.**
- **If there's any chance the affected areas will freeze again, don't thaw them out.** If they're already thawed out, wrap them up so that they don't become frozen again.
- **Get emergency medical help** if numbness remains during warming. If you can't get help immediately, warm severely frostbitten hands or feet in warm — not hot — water. You can warm other frostbitten areas, such as your nose, cheeks or ears, by covering them with your warm hands or by applying warm cloths.

Always be prepared and wear suitable clothing in cold temperatures and protect exposed areas. In cold weather, wear mittens (not gloves); wind-proof, water-resistant, many-layered clothing; two pairs of socks (cotton next to skin, then wool); and a hat or scarf that covers the ears (to avoid substantial heat loss through the scalp). Preparation is the key to staying safe in the winter months ahead.

This article has been adapted from www.mayoclinic.com