

# COLD CAN KILL

---

## HYPOTHERMIA



Published by Literacy Council of Alaska and  
University of Alaska Sea Grant College Program

# **COLD CAN KILL**

---

# **HYPOTHERMIA**

Written by Christine Betz Hall

**Literacy Council of Alaska**

823 3rd Ave.  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
(907) 456-6212



**Alaska Sea Grant College Program**

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
P.O. Box 755040  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-5040  
(907) 474-6707

**SG-ED-23 Price: \$3.00**

**Outdoor Survival Series for New Readers**

Elmer E. Rasmuson Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

Hall, Christine Betz

Cold can kill ; hypothermia / written by Christine Betz Hall.

(SG-ED-23) (Outdoor survival series for new readers)

1. Hypothermia. 2. Survival skills. 3. High interest-low vocabulary books. 4. Readers for new literates. I. Alaska Sea Grant College Program. II. Literacy Council of Alaska. III. Title. IV. Series: Sea grant education publication ; 23. V. Series.

RC88.5.C.65 1994

ISBN 1-56612-026-8

Second Printing 1996

## **About This Book**

This book has some do's and don'ts for hypothermia. If you need more help, ask your doctor. The author and publishers are not responsible if someone is hurt after you follow guidelines in this book.

## **Author Biography**

Christine Betz Hall is Library Literacy Project coordinator for the Fairbanks North Star Borough, a former middle school English teacher, and a tutor of English as a second language. She works with the Literacy Council of Alaska training volunteer tutors to help adults improve reading, writing, and spoken English skills.

## **Hypothermia**

You are out camping or fishing. You are hunting, or picking berries, or riding your snowmachine.

- You get cold.
- You start to shiver and you cannot stop.
- You move slowly.
- You stumble and fall.
- You do not think well.
- You feel sleepy.

These are signs of hypothermia. If you have hypothermia, you can die.

## **What is hypothermia?**

**Hypo = low**

**Thermia = heat**

**Hypothermia = low heat**

Your body can get too cold.  
Your heart can stop beating.  
Hypothermia can kill you on  
land or in the water. You can die  
in winter or summer.

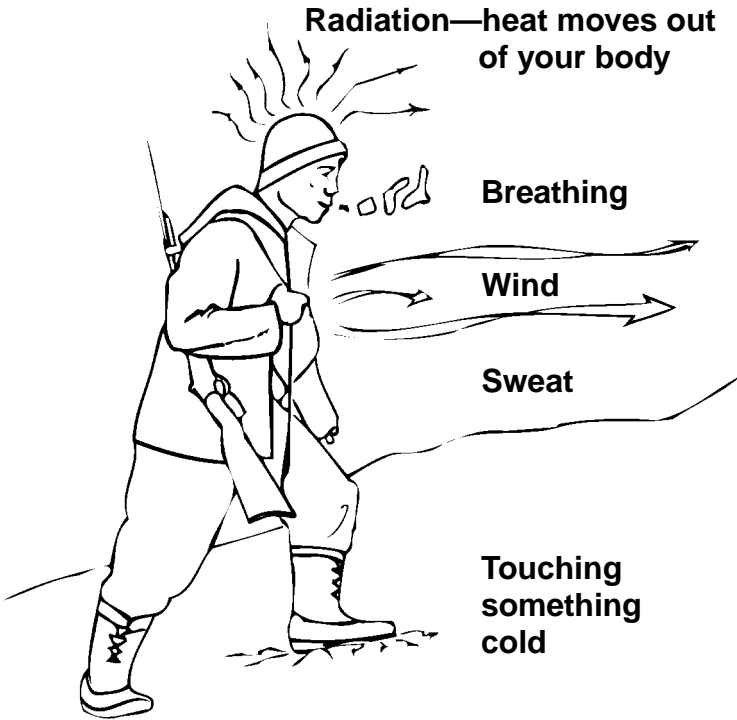
Hypothermia kills people who  
are not ready for cold.

## **What causes hypothermia?**

Most hypothermia happens when it is 30° to 50°F above zero! Some people do not think 30° to 50°F is cold. They do not dress for cold. People do not stay out of the wind. They get wet in the rain or snow. Or they fall in a river or lake. People do not go inside when they are cold.

Some people do not tell a friend they are cold. Sometimes people say they are OK when they are not. Sometimes they do not know they have a problem.

## How do you lose heat?

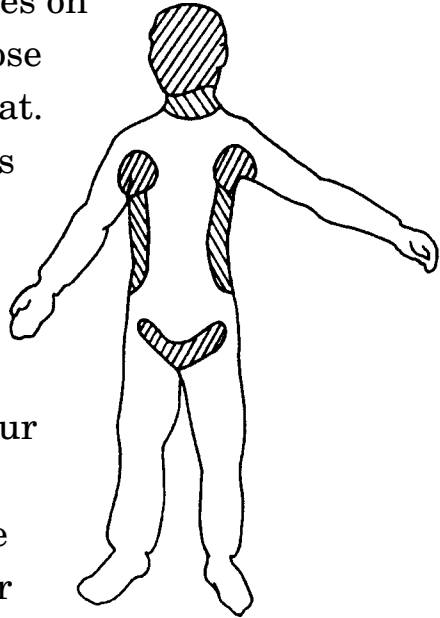


Your body loses heat outdoors. Your body loses heat when you breathe. You lose heat when you sweat. You lose heat when wind or water moves around you. You lose heat when you touch something cold.

Five places on your body lose the most heat.

These places are called your high heat loss areas.

They are your head, neck, armpits, the sides of your chest, and your groin.



Half of your body's heat is lost through your head. So wear a hat! When you lose too much heat, you have hypothermia.

You lose more heat when you drink alcohol. Alcohol tricks your body. You may not think you are too cold. You may not remember how to help yourself. If you drink alcohol you may not shiver. You can still have hypothermia.



## **Is this hypothermia?**

How do you know if you or a friend has hypothermia? Watch for the signs!

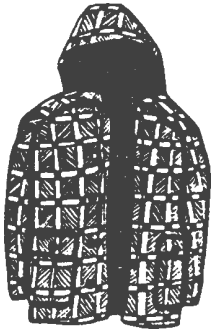
- Your hands and feet might feel cold first.
- You cannot stop shivering.
- You move slowly.
- You cannot walk well.
- You talk slowly.
- Your hands stop working.
- You cannot think well.

You may not think you are in danger. But you can die.

## Stop hypothermia

Stop hypothermia before it starts.

1. Wear warm clothes. Use wool, fur or polypropylene (pol-ee-PRO-pi-leen). Wear layers of clothing. Wear a hat.



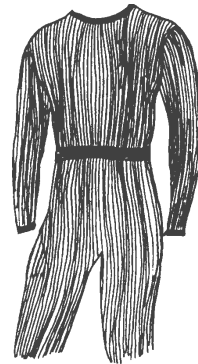
**Jacket**



**Hat**



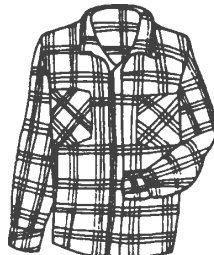
**Pants**



**Long underwear**



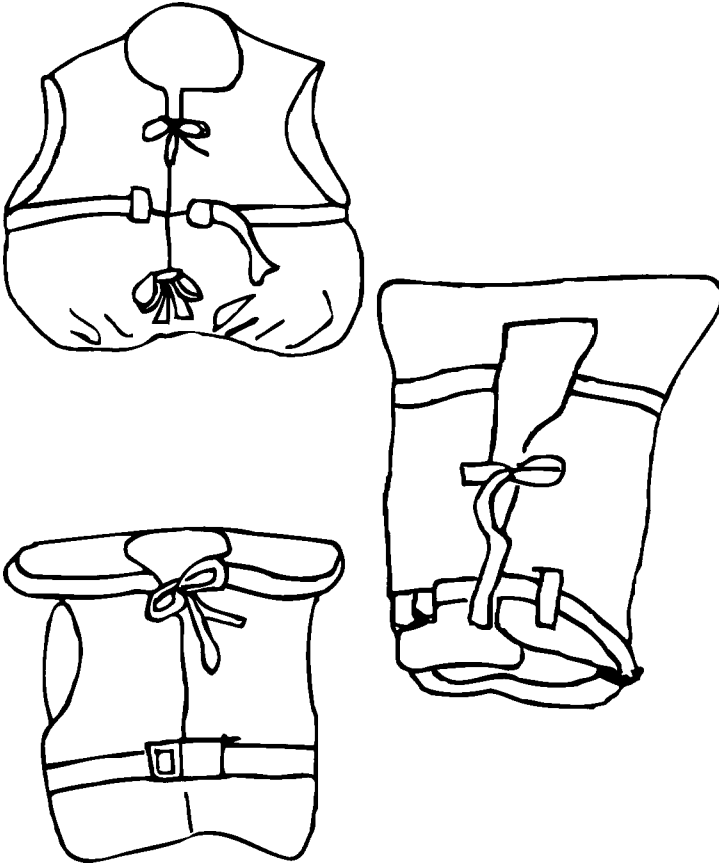
**Socks**



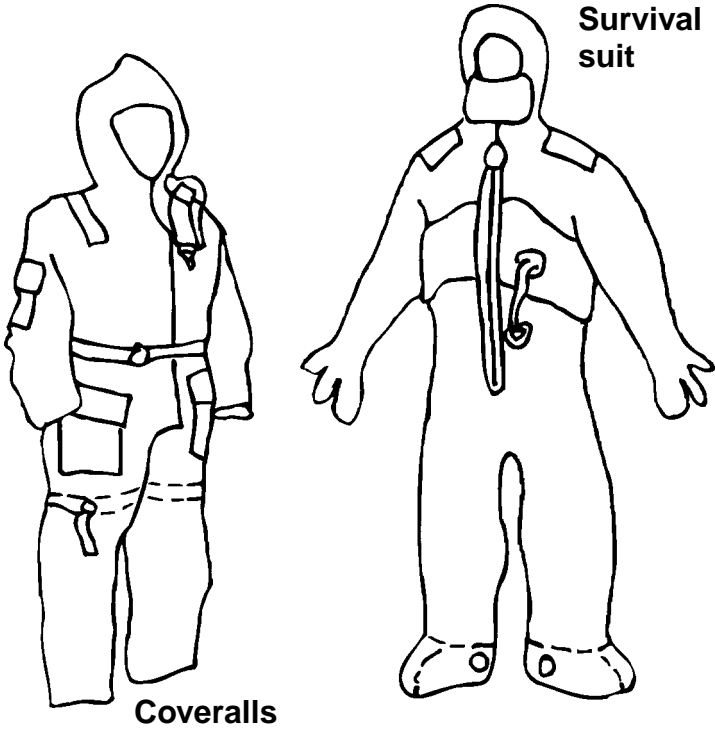
**Shirt**

2. Take a friend with you.  
Watch each other.
3. Stay dry. Put on rain clothes before you get wet. Change clothes if you get wet. Wet clothes make you colder.
4. Eat good foods. Drink a lot of water or fruit juice.  
Do not drink alcohol.  
Do not eat snow.
5. Rest when you are tired.

6. Near water, wear a personal flotation device (PFD).



**Life vests**



## **Cold water hypothermia**

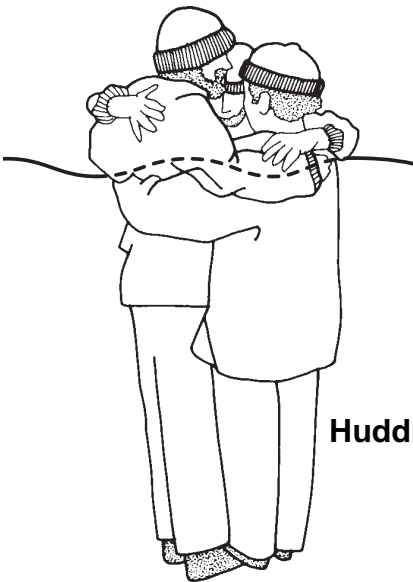
If you fall into a lake or river, you can die of hypothermia. A PFD can help you stay alive in the water. It will help you float.

A PFD can keep you warmer and drier. Hold onto something that floats. Stay still in the water. You lose more heat when cold water moves around you. You lose more heat when you swim or tread water. Stay with the boat if it is safe. Climb up as far as you can. Keep your head dry. Stay warm.

Protect the high heat loss areas with the H.E.L.P. position.  
Use the Huddle position for a group.



**H.E.L.P.**  
(heat escape  
lessening  
position)

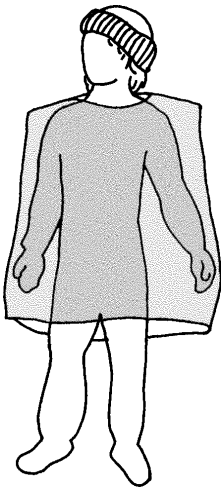


**Huddle position**

## Help for hypothermia

What do you do for a person with hypothermia?

1. Be gentle!
2. Get the person out of the cold water, wind, or air.
3. Dry off wet people. Put on dry clothes.
4. Stop more heat loss. Cover high heat loss areas. Put on a warm hat and scarf.



Use a plastic garbage bag. Cut a hole for the head. Wear it like a shirt.

## **Very cold?**

What do you do with people who cannot walk or talk? What if they are not conscious (CON-shus)? Get them to a hospital! Be gentle when you move them!

Is the hospital too far? Share your body heat. Take off the person's clothes. Put the person in a sleeping bag. Take off your clothes. Get in the sleeping bag with the person. Warm the person skin to skin.

## **Do Not**

- 1. Do not rub cold hands or feet.**
- 2. Do not give the person a warm bath or shower.**
- 3. Do not let them move or walk around.**
- 4. *Never* give a very cold person alcohol or drinks.**

## **Remember!**

When you go outdoors, think! Stop hypothermia before it starts. Stay warm. Stay dry. Eat well. Drink a lot of water. Rest often.

You cannot stop the weather. You will meet rain, wind, snow and cold. But you can watch for hypothermia. You can know what to do. You can be ready.

### Credits

Editing: Sue Keller; layout: OK Publishing; cover design: Susan Gibson; illustrations: Vern Culp, Mary Clemons, Kristie Sherrodd, Karen Lundquist, and Chris Hall.

### Acknowledgments

For helpful text reviews, thanks go to Mary Hutchison, New Readers Press of Laubach Literacy International, Syracuse, NY; and Jerry Dzugan, Alaska Marine Safety Education Association, Sitka, AK.

The contents of this booklet were developed under a grant to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Library in cooperation with the **Literacy Council of Alaska**, under the Library Services Construction Act Title VI from the U.S. Dept. of Education. The contents are not necessarily endorsed by the U.S. Dept. of Education or the Federal Government.

Work on the booklet also was sponsored by the **University of Alaska Sea Grant College Program**, cooperatively supported by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Office of Sea Grant, grant NA46RG0104, project A/75-01; and by the University of Alaska Fairbanks with state funds. The University of Alaska is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educational institution.

Sea Grant is a unique partnership with public and private sectors combining research, education, and technology transfer for public service. This national network of universities meets changing environmental and economic needs of people in our coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes regions.

