



Safety sheet: Hypothermia

Avoidance:

As a rower the best way to avoid hypothermia is to dress correctly for the conditions, and be prepared for them to change as the outing progresses. Know the expected conditions, and remember extra clothing can usually be carried in the boat. See the clothing section for advice on what to wear.

Coaches should be aware of expected conditions, constantly evaluate the state of their athletes and be prepared to cut outings short to avoid this dangerous condition.

Spotting hypothermia:

Hypothermia does not require temperatures to be below freezing. Mild symptoms include shivering, blue extremities, numbness, tingling, and blotchy skin. Severe symptoms include decreased coordination, muscle rigidity, slow breathing, and slow or irregular pulse. This can progress to dilated and fixed pupils, absent reflexes, and cardiac arrest and death.

Treating hypothermia:

- 1) Dry the victim and cover with blankets. (Foil emergency blankets are available in launch kits and The Isis boat bay)
- 2) Shelter the victim from wind and water.
- 3) Provide heat to the neck, underarms, and groin. **Heat only the trunk initially** to avoid core temperature after-drop. (Extremities cool faster than the trunk. If you re-warm the extremities, their colder blood will re-enter the circulation and actually worsen hypothermia)
- 4) Keep the victim lying down.
- 5) Administer warm fluids only after the victim stops shivering
- 6) Avoid moving/jarring the victim suddenly because this may trigger an abnormal heart rhythm.
- 7) CPR may be necessary. Resuscitation should not be stopped until the person's body temperature is at least 95°F/35°C (never give up: one reported victim recovered in a morgue).

The best way to treat hypothermia is to not get it in the first place. The risk of hypothermia can be easily reduced by following 3 simple practices:

- 1) As a coxen, always bring layers of light warm kit, including warm hats and scarves. Think both water and wind proof when it comes to your clothing and comfort.
- 2) Ensure your rowers all have the adequate kit for the conditions.
- 3) Don't go out in conditions that you feel are beyond your capabilities.

Remember individuals suffering severe hypothermia may require the attention of paramedics. Do not hesitate to dial the emergency services should you think this necessary.