

Insights For Treating Frostbite

(NAPS)—The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) offers this information about the treatment and care of frostbite in the feet.

Cold temperatures can be devastating to individuals who are unprepared. Prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures can lead to severe injury if proper treatment is not provided in a timely manner. Forty-seven percent of frostbite cases involve the foot and ankle, and a podiatric physician can identify frostbite injuries and provide appropriate treatment.

Frostbite injuries to the feet are classified as either superficial or deep. Superficial frostbite involves the skin, whereas deep frostbite includes damage to skin, deep connective tissue, muscles, tendons, nerves and bones.

“The most effective way of dealing with frostbite is to prevent it from occurring in the first place,” said David Schofield, DPM, Board of Trustees for the APMA. If you know you will be exposed to the cold weather follow these tips:

- Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol.
- Dress appropriately.
- If you begin to feel pain, numbness or tingling in your feet get out of the cold as soon as possible.

The first thing a podiatrist looks for in a patient with frostbite is hypothermia. After rewarming



the affected area (which generally takes about 20 minutes), he or she will apply a loose, sterile dressing and immobilize the injured foot in order to minimize circulation problems. In addition, oral and intravenous medications may be administered.

In severe cases, surgery may be necessary, depending on the depth and extent of tissue damage. The podiatrist's ultimate goal is to reduce pain and return the patient to normal activity as soon as possible.

Frostbite is a very serious injury that can involve significant damage to the feet. Therefore, prompt diagnosis and proper treatment by a podiatric physician is essential. For more information on frostbite and foot care in general, visit www.apma.org or call 1-800-FOOTCARE (366-8227) for a free brochure.