

Texting gloves dangerous in winter, specialist says: Unprotected fingers, toes, ears and noses susceptible to frostbite

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The popular half-gloves that leave fingers uncovered for texting may be good for communicating electronically, but they may also lead to permanent loss of fingers due to exposure to the cold.

"Fingers are one of the first body parts to feel the effects of the cold and damp, and along with toes, ears and the nose, are frequently subjected to frostbite and even [amputation](#)," said Arthur Sanford, MD, Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care and Burns, Loyola University Health System. "Better to fat finger a text due to winter gloves than to lose a finger due to the cold."

Frostbite is most likely to happen in body parts farthest from the heart and those with large exposed areas. "Blood vessels start to constrict at or below 90 degrees Fahrenheit to preserve body temperature," Sanford said. "The lack of blood in these areas of the body can lead to freezing and the death of [skin tissue](#)."

Sanford said he treats frostbite in people of all ages. "The senior citizen who goes out in the snow to get her mail, falls, breaks a hip and lies in the cold and wet until being discovered is a typical victim of frostbite," he said. "But the younger person who goes on a drinking bender and walks home in the snow and damp is also a familiar sight at Loyola trauma."

When suffering from prolonged exposure to cold, use room temperature or slightly [warm water](#) to gently revitalize the body. "Do not use hot water, do not rub with handfuls of snow and do not vigorously massage the frozen area," Sanford warned. Overstimulation can actually worsen the situation.

Winter wellness tips from Sanford and Loyola:

Dress in layers. "If a sweater, pair of socks or other article of clothing gets wet, you can quickly remove it and still be protected from the cold and wet," he said.

- Wear a hat, gloves or mittens and proper footwear, including socks and boots. "Texting gloves may look cool and be handy for communicating, but it is better to wear full gloves or mittens and save your fingers," Sanford said.
- When outerwear becomes wet, go inside and change to dry clothing. "Wet socks are especially dangerous and can lead to a condition called trench foot, which results in poor blood circulation, tissue decay, infections and even amputation," he said.
- If the affected area becomes numb, turns red or blue, swells or feels hot, go to the Emergency Department. "An Emergency physician will assess the tissue and take the proper steps to save the body part," Sanford said.

Hypothermia, when the [body](#) temperature is below 95 degrees F (35 degrees C), was the cause of death for 700 Americans between 1979 and 1998. " 'Frostbite in January, operate in July,' is a common mantra here at Loyola," Sanford said. "Bundling up for winter may take you out of media circulation temporarily but better than to permanently lose the ability to text due to [frostbite](#)."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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