

Heat Related Illnesses

What is a heat related illness?

Normally, the body has ways of keeping itself cool, by letting heat escape through the skin, and by evaporating sweat (perspiration). If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, the victim may suffer a heat-related illness. Anyone can be susceptible although the very young and very old are at greater risk. Heat-related illnesses can become serious or even deadly if unattended.

How can I Prevent Heat-Related Illness

Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. It is also a good idea to wear hats or to use an umbrella.

Drink water. Carry water or juice with you and drink continuously even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.

Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein which increase metabolic heat.

Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.

Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Stay indoors in an air conditioned environment when possible.

Take regular breaks when engaged in physical activity on warm days. Take time out to find a cool place. If you recognize that you, or someone else, is showing the signals of a heat-related illness, stop activity and find a cool place. Remember, have fun, but stay cool!

What are the causes of a heat-related illness?

Heat Wave: More than 48 hours of high heat (90° F or higher) and high humidity (80 percent relative humidity or higher) are expected.

Heat Exhaustion:

Heat exhaustion is less dangerous than heat stroke. It typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a warm, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Fluid loss causes blood flow to decrease in the vital organs, resulting in a form of shock. With heat exhaustion, sweat does not evaporate as it should, possibly because of high humidity or

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too many layers of clothing. As a result, the body is not cooled properly. Signals include cool, moist, pale, flushed or red skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. Body temperature will be near normal.

Heat Stroke:

Also known as sunstroke, heat stroke is life-threatening. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. Signals include hot, red and dry skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Body temperature can be very high--sometimes as high as 105° F.

What are the Stages of Heat-Related Illness

The first stage begins with heat cramps in muscles. These cramps can be very painful. If you are caring for a person who has heat cramps, have that person stop activity and rest. If the person is fully awake and alert, suggest drinking small amounts of cool water or a or a decaffeinated/non-alcoholic beverage. If the victim has no other signals of heat-related illness, the person may resume activity after the cramps stop.

The signals of the next, more serious stage of a heat-related illness - heat exhaustion -include,

- Cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity)
- Headache
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion
- Nausea
- The skin may or may not feel hot

The signals of the late stage of a heat-related illness -called heat stroke -include,

- Vomiting
- Decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness
- High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105° degrees F)
- Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Rapid, shallow breathing

This late stage of a heat-related illness is life threatening. Call “911 for help.

Is there any General Care for Heat Emergencies?

- Cool the Body
- Give Fluids
- Minimize Shock

For heat cramps or heat exhaustion:

Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. If the person is fully awake and alert, give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let him or her drink too quickly. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as towels or wet sheets. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number if the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness.

For heat stroke:

Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation! Help is needed fast. Call 9-1-1 or your local EMS number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. (Do not use rubbing alcohol because it closes the skin's pores and prevents heat loss.) Watch for signals of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear. Keep the person lying down.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION RECORD

Subject: STAGES OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Location: _____

Instructor's name & Signature: _____

Date of Session: / / Time Started : am / pm Time Finished : am / pm

Please print your name and job title. Then sign your name.

ATTENDEES:

Print Name	Job Title	Signature