

Heat Is a Health Hazard!

When the temperature soars and humidity rises, it's time to take precautions to avoid dangerous health consequences such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke and overexposure to the sun. With heat exhaustion and stroke, the most susceptible among us are seniors, children, and people with chronic illnesses. However, everyone is at risk. The early symptoms of heat exhaustion can sneak up on us. Some people feel a bit lightheaded and weak and might have a touch of nausea. The serious problems develop when symptoms are ignored and additional fluids are not taken right away. The primary cause of heat exhaustion is dehydration and a loss of electrolytes such as sodium. Generally, try to stay well-hydrated and take in extra salt (for those of you who can use salt). Drink even though you don't feel like it - you can't count on your thirst mechanism to prompt you. Here are the major symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke and some safety tips to help you cope with health emergencies during the dog days of summer.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

Body temperature usually normal or only slightly elevated.

- * Dry mouth.
- * Fatigue, weakness.
- * Dizziness.
- * Headache.
- * Nausea, sometimes vomiting.
- * Weak and rapid pulse.
- * Sweating.
- * Cool, clammy, pale skin.

NOTE: Symptoms take time to develop - sometimes several hours after dehydration occurs.

Treatments for heat exhaustion:

- * Get out of the sun and into a cool place.
- * Drink more fluids (electrolyte sports drinks may help), but don't drink too fast or you could become nauseous.
- * Eat salty snacks.
- * Rest.
- * Loosen clothing.

Be aware that heat stroke can come after heat exhaustion, but it can also develop quickly and independently if one's core body temperature rises too high.

Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- * Very high body temperature (103 degrees or higher).
- * Hot, dry, red skin.
- * No sweating.
- * Disorientation, hallucinations, delirium
- * Rapid breathing and fast pulse, then slow breathing and weak pulse.
- * Convulsions.
- * Loss of consciousness.

NOTE: Symptoms can come on quickly.

Heat stroke can occur within 10 - 15 minutes of the first symptoms. If treatment is not given immediately, permanent damage can occur to internal organs.

HEAT STROKE IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. CALL 9-1-1 OR TRANSPORT VICTIM TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY.

Immediate care for a heat stroke victim includes:

- * Move person to cool place indoors or in the shade outdoors.
 - * Lower body temperature as soon as possible.
- Remove clothing and wrap person in a wet sheet, or wet their cotton clothing.
- * Fan person with electric fan or manually (do not place wet items too close to electric fan).
 - * Place ice packs or cold compresses on the neck, under armpits, and in the groin area.
 - * If child is unconscious, carefully place them in cool water up to their neck.
 - * If child is conscious, try to get them to drink cool water, slowly.
- Person may not be able to drink if delirious (do not force them).*

Source: Federal Citizen Information Center