



Heat Related Illnesses

Heat related illnesses are preventable; but if left unchecked, could lead to death. Some health conditions can make it harder for the body to stay cool in hot weather. These include old age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn, and drug or alcohol use. Heat illnesses can also lead to injuries. People are more likely to get injured if they get tired or dizzy from the heat while working.

Symptoms of **heat cramps** include:

- Muscle spasms in the legs, arms, or abdomen.

Symptoms of **heat exhaustion** include:

- Quick, shallow breathing.
- Heavy sweating and thirst.
- Muscle cramps.
- Headache and irritability.
- Elevated body temperature and heart rate.
- Moist, cool skin. Pale skin color.
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Decrease in urination.
- Dizziness, weakness, lack of coordination and fainting.

Symptoms of **heat stroke** include:

- Nausea, dizziness, fainting, loss of consciousness.
- Slurred speech, confusion, agitation, hallucinations, altered mental state.
- Dry, red, hot skin.
- Temperature of 105 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
- Seizures.
- No sweating despite the heat.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. It can lead to organ failure and death. Call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately if you have symptoms.

Tips to avoid Heat Related Illnesses

Get Plenty to Drink. Sweating removes needed salt and minerals from the body. When it is hot, drink more water, juice and sports drinks. Avoid drinks with caffeine (tea, coffee, and cola) and alcohol. Be sure to eat regularly.

Stay Cool Indoors. The best way to beat the heat is to stay in an air-conditioned area. A cool shower or bath is also a good way to cool off.

Wear Light Clothing and Sunscreen. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. In the hot sun, a wide-brimmed hat will keep the head cool. If you will be in direct sun, use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and follow package directions. Reapply every 2 hours while in the sun.

Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully. Try to be less active during the hottest part of the day. If you must be out in the heat, plan your activities so that you are outdoors either before noon or in the evening. While outdoors, rest often in a shady area. Never leave kids or pets in a parked car.

Pace Yourself. If you are not used to working or exercising in hot weather, start slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Take frequent, regularly scheduled breaks. If activity in the heat makes your heart pound or leaves you gasping for breath, stop activity, get into a cool or shady area, and rest. Especially if you feel lightheaded, confused, weak or feel faint.

Use a Buddy System. During a heat wave, check on your friends and family and have someone do the same for you. If you know someone who is elderly or has a health condition, check on them several times a day. Watch for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. High temperatures can cause serious health problems. Know the symptoms of heat-related illness and be ready to help.

Warning: If your doctor limits the amount of fluid you drink, or if you take water pills, ask him or her how much you should drink when the weather is hot. If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.