

HEAT STRESS

High temperatures and humidity stress the body's ability to cool itself, and heat illness becomes a special concern during hot weather. There are three major forms of heat illness: **heat cramps**, **heat exhaustion**, and **heat stroke**, with heat stroke being a life threatening condition.

Heat cramps: Heat cramps are muscle spasms which usually affect the arms, legs or stomach. Frequently they don't occur until sometime later after work, at night, or when relaxing. Heat cramps are caused by heavy sweating, especially when water is replaced by drinking, but not salt or potassium. Although heat cramps can be quite painful, they usually don't result in permanent damage. To prevent them, drink electrolyte solutions such as Gatorade during the day and try eating more fruits like bananas.

Heat Exhaustion: Heat exhaustion is more serious than heat cramps. It occurs when the body's internal air-conditioning system is overworked, but hasn't completely shut down. In heat exhaustion, the surface blood vessels and capillaries which originally enlarge to cool the blood collapse from loss of body fluids and necessary minerals. This happens when you don't drink enough fluids to replace what you're sweating away.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include: headache, heavy sweating, intense thirst, dizziness, fatigue, loss of coordination, nausea, impaired judgment, loss of appetite, hyperventilation, tingling in hands or feet, anxiety, cool moist skin, weak and rapid pulse.

Heat Stroke: Heat stroke is a life threatening illness with a high death rate. It occurs when the body has depleted its supply of water and salt, and the victim's body temperature rises to deadly levels. A heat stroke victim may first suffer heat cramps and/or the heat exhaustion before progressing into the heat stroke stage, but this is not

always the case. It should be noted that, on the job, heat stroke is sometimes mistaken for heart attack. It is therefore very important to be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stroke- and to check for them anytime an employee collapses while working in a hot environment.

Symptoms of heat stroke in the early stages include high body temperature, (103 degrees F); a distinct absence of sweating (usually); hot red or flush dry skin; rapid pulse; difficulty breathing; constricted pupils; any/ all the signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion such as dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, or confusion, but more severe. Advance symptoms may be seizure or convulsions, collapse, loss of consciousness, and a body temperature of over 108 degrees F.

Anyone can suffer a heat illness, but by taking a few simple precautions, they can be prevented;

- Condition yourself for working in hot environments- start slowly then build up to more physical work. Allow your body to adjust over a few days.
- Drink lots of liquids. Don't wait until you're thirsty, by then, there's a good chance you're already on your way to being dehydrated. Electrolyte drinks are good for replacing both water and minerals lost through sweating. Never drink alcohol, and avoid caffeinated beverages like coffee and pop.
- Take a break if you notice you're getting a headache or you start to feeling overheated. Cool off for a few minutes before going back to work.
- Wear light weight, light colored clothing when working out in the sun.
- Take advantage of fans and air-conditioners.
- Get enough sleep at night.

With a little caution and common sense, you can avoid heat illness.

FIRST AID FOR HEAT RELATED ILLNESS:

Extreme heat brings with it the possibility of heat-induced illnesses. The following table lists these illnesses, their symptoms, and the first aid treatment.

Condition	Symptoms	First Aid
Sunburn	Skin redness and pain, possible swelling, blisters, fever, headaches	Take a shower using soap to remove oils that may block pores, preventing the body from cooling naturally. Apply dry, sterile dressings to any blisters, and get medical attention.
Heat Cramps	Painful spasms, usually in leg and abdominal muscles; heavy sweating	Get the victim to a cooler location. Lightly stretch and gently massage affected muscles to relieve spasms. Give sips of up to a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. (Do not give liquids with caffeine or alcohol.) Discontinue liquids, if victim is nauseated.
Heat Exhaustion	Heavy sweating but skin may be cool, pale, or flushed. Weak pulse. Normal body temperature is possible, but temperature will likely rise. Fainting or dizziness, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion, and headaches are possible.	Get victim to lie down in a cool place. Loosen or remove clothing. Apply cool, wet clothes. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned place. Give sips of water if victim is conscious. Be sure water is consumed slowly. Give half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Discontinue water if victim is nauseated. Seek immediate medical attention if vomiting occurs.

<p>Heat Stroke (a severe medical emergency)</p>	<p>High body temperature (105+); hot, red, dry skin; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid shallow breathing. Victim will probably not sweat unless victim was sweating from recent strenuous activity. Possible unconsciousness.</p>	<p>Call 9-1-1 or emergency medical services, or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal.</p> <p>Move victim to a cooler environment.</p> <p>Removing clothing</p> <p>Try a cool bath, sponging, or wet sheet to reduce body temperature.</p> <p>Watch for breathing problems.</p> <p>Use extreme caution.</p> <p>Use fans and air conditioners.</p>
--	--	--