

Heat-Related Illnesses

Heat Stroke

Illness Description

- Most serious heat-related illness
- Body temperature rises rapidly
- Body is unable to cool down
- Body temperature can rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes
- Fatal if treatment is delayed

Signs and Symptoms

- Confusion
- Slurred speech
- Unconsciousness
- Seizures
- Heavy sweating or hot, dry skin
- Very high body temperature
- Rapid heart rate

First Aid

- Call 911 for emergency care
- Stay with individual until emergency medical services arrive
- Move individual to a shaded, cool area and remove outer clothing
- Cool individual quickly with cold water or an ice bath or wet the skin, place cold wet clothes on skin or soak clothing with cool water
- Circulate air around the individual to speed cooling
- Place cold wet clothes or ice on head, neck, armpits, and groin

Heat Exhaustion

- Body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through excessive sweating
- Individuals most prone to heat exhaustion are the elderly, those with high blood pressure, and those working in a hot environment

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Irritability
- Thirst
- Heavy sweating
- Elevated body temperature
- Decreased urine output
- Heat cramps

- Take individual to clinic or emergency room for evaluation and treatment or call 911
- Stay with the individual until help arrives
- Remove individual from hot area and give liquids to drink
- Remove unnecessary clothing, including socks and shoes
- Cool the individual with cold compresses or have the individual wash head, face, and neck with cold water
- Encourage frequent sips of cold water

Rhabdomyolysis

- Medical condition associated with heat stress and prolonged physical exertion
- Causes rapid breakdown, rupture, and death of muscle, which causes a release of electrolytes and large proteins into the bloodstream

- Muscle cramps/pain
- Irregular heart rhythms
- Abnormally dark (cola colored) urine
- Weakness
- Exercise intolerance
- Asymptomatic

- Stop activity
- Increase oral hydration with water
- Seek immediate care and ask to be checked for rhabdomyolysis

Heat Syncope

- Occurs with prolonged standing or sudden rising from sitting or lying position
- Contributing factors include dehydration and lack of acclimatization

- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Light-headedness

- Sit or lie down in a cool place
- Slowly drink water, clear juice or a sports drinks

Heat Cramps

- Affects individuals who sweat a lot during strenuous activity
- Sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture levels

- Muscle cramps, pain, or spasms in the abdomen, arms, or legs

- Drink water and have a snack and/or sports drink every 15 to 20 minutes
- Avoid salt tablets
- Seek medical attention if the individual has heart problems, is on a low sodium diet, or if cramps do not subside within 1 hour

Heat Rash

- Skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather

- Looks like red cluster of pimples or small blisters
- Usually appears on the neck, upper chest, groin, under the breasts, and in the elbow creases

- Move to a cooler less humid environment
- Keep rash area dry
- Powder may be applied to increase comfort
- Ointments and creams should not be used