

Heat Related Illnesses

During the summer when temperatures are high, people become ill or even die from heat related illnesses.

Overexposure to high temperatures can result in heat disorders, such as heat exhaustion, heatstroke or heat cramps. Sunstroke is a form of heatstroke caused by overexposure to the sun.

When the body's temperature control system is overloaded, the body normally cools itself by sweating. Sometimes sweating is just not enough, and when sweating is not enough to cool your body, your body temperature rises and you can become ill.

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt contained in sweat.

Symptoms may include:

- Heavy sweating
- Nausea/vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Headache
- Fainting

During strenuous activities, **heat cramps** may occur to people who sweat a lot. Sweating depletes the body's salt, which can cause painful cramps to occur in the abdomen, arms or legs.

Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature rises rapidly and the body is unable to control it and cannot cool down.

Symptoms may include:

- High body temperature
- Rapid pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

Seek medical attention for any of the above symptoms

People most at risk for heat related illnesses are:

- Elderly (65 years or older)
- People who are overweight
- Infants and children
- People who are ill or taking certain medications

Tips to stay cool:

- **Drink plenty of fluids, preferably water and juice. Drink less tea, coffee, cola and alcoholic beverages.**
- **Choose light colored, loose fitting clothes.**
- **Stay in a cool place, preferably air-conditioned.**
- **Take a cool shower, bath or sponge bath.**
- **Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a hat or using an umbrella.**

Schedule vigorous outdoor activities for cooler times of the day (before 10:00 AM or after 6:00 PM), and during these activities take frequent breaks and drink plenty of fluids.

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.

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