

SUMMERTIME HEAT CAUTION

Being in the south and working outdoors in the summertime can take a toll on hydration. Be sure to stay properly hydrated. However, this information is being provided as a precaution so you can know the signs of these illnesses and how to avoid them:

Never delay or disregard seeking professional medical advice from your doctor or other qualified healthcare provider because of something you have read on this website.

Staying Cool and Hydrated:

- The best time to consume fluids is before you are thirsty - - by the time you are thirsty, your body is already dehydrated to some degree.
- While pouring water over your head might feel good, it does not have any effect on your core body temperature -- make sure you put plenty of water and other fluids into your body.
- Always wear light-colored and loose-fitting clothing.

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy exercise in hot environments. Inadequate fluid intake often contributes to heat cramps. The spasms may be more intense and more prolonged than typical nighttime leg cramps. Muscles most often affected include those in your calves, arms, abdomen and back (although heat cramps may involve any muscle group involved in the exercise.)

If you suspect heat cramps:

- Rest briefly and cool down
- Drink clear fluids or an electrolyte-containing sports drink
- Practice gentle, range-of-motion stretching and gentle massage of the affected muscle group
- If your cramps don't go away in 1 hour, call your doctor

Heat Exhaustion

Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion often begin suddenly, sometimes after excessive exercise, heaving perspiration and inadequate fluid intake. Signs and symptoms resemble those of shock and may include:

- Feeling faint and nausea
- Ashen appearance
- Rapid, weak heartbeat
- Low blood pressure
- Low-grade fever
- Cool, moist skin

If you suspect heat exhaustion:

- Get the person out of the sun and into a shady or air- conditioned location.
- Lay the person down and elevate the legs and feet slightly.
- Loosen or remove the person's clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water, not iced, or a sports drink containing electrolytes
- Cool the person by spraying or sponging him or her with cool water and fanning.
- Monitor the person carefully. Heat exhaustion can quickly become heatstroke. If fever greater than 102 F, fainting, confusion, seizures occur or any other concerning symptoms, dial 911 and call for emergency medical assistance.

Heatstroke

Heatstroke is similar to heat cramps and heat exhaustion. It is one of the heat-related problems that often occur in hot environments while doing heavy work, usually accompanied by inadequate fluid intake. Older adults, people who are obese and people born with impaired ability to sweat are at high risk of heatstroke. Other risk factors include dehydration, alcohol use, cardiovascular disease and certain medications. What makes heatstroke much more severe and potentially life threatening is that the body's normal mechanisms for dealing with heat stress, such as sweating and temperature control, are lost.

The main sign of heatstroke is markedly elevated body temperature—generally greater than 104 F—with changes in mental status ranging from personality changes to confusion and coma. Skin may be hot and dry, although in heat stroke caused by exertion, the skin is usually moist. Other signs and symptoms may include:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Elevated or lowered blood pressure
- Cessation of sweating
- Irritability, confusion or unconsciousness
- Fainting, which may be the first sign in older adults

If you suspect heat stroke:

- Move the person out of the sun into a shady or air-conditioned space.
- Dial 911 or call for emergency medical assistance
- Cool the person by covering him or her with damp clothes or by spraying with cool water. Direct air onto the person with a fan or newspaper.