

# HEAT STRESS

## Fast Facts



Heat stress, from exertion or hot environments, places individuals at risk for illnesses such as heat stroke, heat exhaustion or heat cramps. Children, the elderly, people with chronic illnesses and people who take certain medications like tranquilizers or diuretics are especially at risk for problems from high summer temperatures.

### Heat Stroke

A condition that occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature, and can cause death or permanent disability.

#### Symptoms

- High body temperature
- Confusion
- Loss of coordination
- Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating
- Throbbing headache
- Seizures, coma

#### First Aid

- Request immediate medical assistance.
- Move the person to a cool, shaded area.
- Remove excess clothing and apply cool water to their body.

### Heat Exhaustion

The body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through sweating.

#### Symptoms

- Rapid heart beat
- Heavy sweating
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Dizziness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Irritability
- Fast, shallow breathing
- Slightly elevated body temperature

#### First Aid

- Rest in a cool area.
- Drink plenty of water or other cool beverages.
- Take a cool shower, bath, or sponge bath.

## Heat Cramps

Affect individuals who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This lowers the body's salt and moisture levels.

### Symptoms

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

### First Aid

- Stop all activity, and sit in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage, or drink water with food.
  - o Avoid salt tablets.
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside.
- Seek medical attention if you have the following: heart problems, are on a low-sodium diet, or if the cramps do not subside within one hour.

## Protect Yourself

Avoid heavy exertion, extreme heat, sun exposure, and high humidity when possible. When these cannot be avoided, take the following preventative steps:

- Monitor your physical condition and that of your neighbors for signs or symptoms of heat illnesses.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing such as cotton.
  - o Avoid non-breathable synthetic clothing.
- Schedule outdoor activities during the coolest parts of day.
- Try to spend at least part of the day in an air conditioned place like a shopping mall, a store, the library, a friend's house, or the movies.
- Drink water frequently. Drink enough water that you never become thirsty.