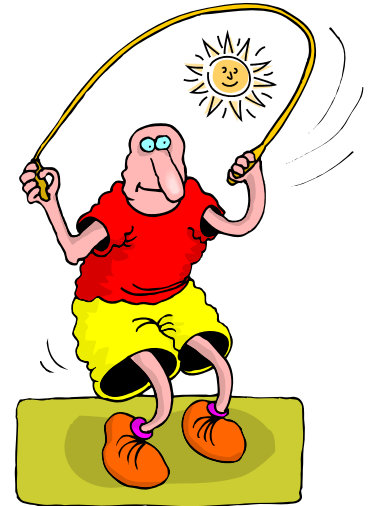




What You Should Know About Heat-Related Illness

For many of us, the summer means fun in the sun! Still, we should all be careful about spending too much time, in too much heat.

Normally, the body has ways of keeping itself cool: by letting heat escape through the skin and by evaporating sweat. If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, a person may suffer a heat-related illness. Heat-related illnesses can become serious or even life threatening if unattended.



What are the symptoms of heat-related illnesses?

Heat-related illness usually comes in stages. The symptoms

ATTENTION:

On a hot day, temperature inside a home or a vehicle can increase rapidly!

For example, during an 85°F day, temperature in a car with windows opened slightly can reach 102° in just 10 minutes and 120° in 30 minutes!

Yet, it takes the **elderly** almost 2x the time of younger people to return to their core body temperature after exposure to extreme heat.

Thus, we should pay attention to older people, especially those who are homebound and may not have access to air conditioning.

of the first stage include **heat cramps** in muscles. Heat cramps are muscle spasms that can occur after physical activity and can be very painful.

The signals of the second, more serious stage, often called **heat exhaustion**, include:

- Cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity)
- Headache
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion
- Nausea
- The skin may or may not feel hot

Heat stroke is the last stage and most serious stage of health-related illnesses. At this stage, a person might have stopped sweating altogether and the skin may appear dry and hot. The pulse rate can be strong but very rapid and the person may find it hard to breathe. Body temperature

could reach 103° Fahrenheit or higher. The person may be vomiting or may even lose consciousness altogether.

Who is at increased risk?

- **Anyone** is at risk for heat-related illnesses.
- However, **children** and the **elderly** are at greater risk.
- In addition, people who are **overweight**, **exercise strenuously** outdoors, or take **certain medications** or **use alcohol** may be at higher risk.

How should I protect myself during high temperatures?

- Remember to **keep cool** and use common sense
- **Drink water** (consult your doctor if you have fluid intake restrictions)
- Wear **appropriate clothing**
- Wear **sunscreen**
- Schedule outdoor **activities carefully**
- **Pace yourself** with strenuous physical exercise
- Stay in **air-conditioned home** or **cooling centers**
- Use a **buddy system** to help monitor those at risk and have someone check up on you



What should I do if I am showing signs of heat-related illness?

1. Immediately **get out of the sun** to a shady or air conditioned area
2. **Cool off** by taking a cool bath or spray yourself with water
3. **Drink water**, but do not drink alcoholic beverages
4. **Get medical assistance** as soon as possible if symptoms persist

Sources:

- NOAA's National Weather Service available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>
- CDC Extreme Heat Fact Sheet available at: http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp
- American Red Cross Extreme Heat Fact Sheet available at: <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/heat.html>
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hotenvt.html>



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