



Hot Weather

by

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Summer is officially here, be aware of these warning signs and some safety tips for dealing with the heat. As the weather heats up we need to adapt our lifestyles and work habits accordingly. Factors such as age, size, weight, and the amount and duration of physical activity play a critical part in how our bodies deal with heat, and whether we will fall victim to some type of heat illness. With all the outdoor work, activities, and social gatherings, we sometimes forget to take the necessary precautions to prevent heat illness. Three types of heat-related illnesses are heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Heat cramps are muscle cramps (commonly in the arms, legs, or stomach) that may occur as a result of physical activity during hot weather. Cramping usually results from a reduction in body fluids caused by heavy sweating. Treatment for heat cramps consists of removing the victim from the hot environment and gradually replacing lost fluids and electrolytes.

Heat exhaustion is a serious form of heat illness characterized by pale and clammy skin, dizziness, weakness, and profuse perspiration. The victim will have approximately normal body temperature and may complain of a headache. Treat heat exhaustion by providing water or electrolyte replacement drinks and moving the victim to a cool area. If not dealt with immediately, heat exhaustion can quickly become heat stroke.

Heat stroke occurs when the body fails to cool itself because the body's temperature-regulating system is overloaded. This may cause the body temperature to rise to a fatal level. In addition to high body temperature, signs of heat stroke may include the absence of sweating; hot, red, dry skin; and a rapid pulse. Heat stroke is a true medical emergency. Call for professional medical help immediately. First-aid treatment includes lowering the victim's body temperature quickly. Pouring cool water over the victim will help. Loosen or remove clothing. If possible, move the victim to a cool place.

Plan ahead, it is much easier and safer to prevent heat illnesses than it is to treat them. Recognize the importance of cooling off before you overheat. Acclimate your body, drink plenty of water, or sports drinks that contain electrolytes and potassium before and during work. Protect and cool yourself with head & neck shades. There are also products such as cooling towels, headbands, headwraps, & vests that are evaporative for aid in cooling to body. Take rests in shady areas such as a shade tree or a pop-up tent. Keep coolers filled for quick hydration when workers need it, and when possible, work earlier in the morning when it is cooler.

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