

Surviving the Hot Weather

Acknowledgement, National Safety Council, www.nsc.org

Heat illness includes a range of disorders that result when your body is exposed to more heat than it can handle. If allowed to accumulate, the heat would quickly increase your body temperature beyond its comfortable 98.6° F. Consider the following 3 heat-related illnesses:

1. Heatstroke

Heatstroke is the most serious and life-threatening heat-related illness. In certain circumstances, your temperature may rise to life-threatening levels, and you can become delirious or lose consciousness. If you do not rid your body of excess heat fast enough, it "cooks" the brain and other vital organs. It is often fatal, and those who do survive may have permanent damage to their vital organs. Symptoms of heatstroke are: the victim's body feels extremely hot when touched, an altered mental behavior ranging from slight confusion/disorientation to coma, irrational or agitated behavior, and seizures. In severe heatstroke, the victim can go into a coma in less than one hour.

What to do

1. Move person to a half-sitting position in the shade.
2. Call for emergency medical help immediately.
3. Apply ice packs on neck, armpits or groin.

2. Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is caused by water or salt depletion, or severe dehydration. Heat exhaustion affects persons who do not drink enough fluids while working in hot areas. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include severe thirst, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting and sometimes diarrhea. The affected person often mistakenly believes he or she has the flu, and uncontrolled heat exhaustion can evolve into heatstroke. Other symptoms include profuse sweating, clammy or pale skin, dizziness and/or rapid pulse, and slightly above normal body temperature

What to do

1. Sit or lie down in the shade.
2. Drink cool, lightly salted water or sports drink.
3. If persistent, gently apply wet towels and call for emergency medical help.

3. Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful muscular spasms that happen suddenly affecting legs or abdominal muscles. They usually happen after physical activity in people who sweat a lot or have not had enough fluids. Victims may be drinking water without adequate salt content.

What to do

1. Sit or lie down in the shade.
2. Drink cool, lightly salted water or sports drink.
3. Stretch affected muscles.