

How to Deal with Heat Illnesses

By Tri-Rehab

Heat cramps - Muscular pain and spasm that occur in the body when it loses too much salt (sodium) from sweating and an inadequate amount of fluids aren't taken back into the body.

Signs and symptoms:

1. Severe muscle pain and spasm
2. Pale, moist skin
3. Normal body temperature
4. Individual is usually conscious
5. Rapid pulse
6. Faint feeling, dizziness and exhausted

Treatment:

1. Move the individual to a cool place if possible. Have them lie down if feeling faint.
2. If not nauseated, have them drink water or an electrolyte drink, such as Gatorade
3. Encourage them to minimize activity for the next 10-12 hours if possible
4. Apply ice as needed for 20 minutes to the muscles if soreness is present
5. Encourage overhydration to replenish fluids

Heat Syncope - Feelings of weakness and tiredness which ordinarily improve with diet and rest.

Signs and symptoms:

1. Weakness and fatigue
2. Headache
3. Slightly elevated body temperature

Treatment:

1. Get out of the heat
2. Get plenty of rest and eat a good diet with appropriate fluids

Heat Exhaustion - Through prolonged exposure to heat and sweating, the body loses large amounts of salt and water. When fluids and salt are not replaced, body functions begin to be affected.

Signs and symptoms:

1. Headache and dizziness
2. Profuse sweating
3. Pale, cool, sweaty skin
4. Body temperature normal or slightly elevated
5. Weakness or dry mouth

6. Possible heat cramps
7. Individual states they don't feel well and could be nauseous

Treatment:

1. Move the individual to a cool place
2. Apply a cool cloth to forehead and back of the neck
3. Remove as much clothing as possible - shoes, socks, hat, etc.
4. Have the individual lie down if faint and try and give fluids

Heat Stroke - A serious condition resulting from failure of the heat regulating mechanism in the body. Heat stroke is a medical emergency!

Signs and symptoms:

1. Dry, red skin
2. No sweating
3. Body temperature of 106 degrees and above
4. Rapid pulse and breathing
5. Dizziness, exhaustion and possible fainting
6. Collapse and unconsciousness

Treatment:

1. Medical emergency - call 911
2. Try and cool the individual down if possible
3. Remove as much clothing as possible

Key features that differentiate heat exhaustion and heat stroke:

1. Sweaty skin
2. Increased body temperature

Prevention of heat problems:

1. Try and have the individuals condition for their respective event beforehand, if possible
2. Wear proper clothing, light colors versus dark, cotton versus polyester
3. Evaluate the weather conditions and the time of day before beginning activity, if possible
4. Drink plenty of fluids and take numerous breaks, if possible
5. Try and consume a good diet