
Types of Heat-Related Problems

Heat Cramps—symptoms include painful cramping and spasms of legs, arms and/or abdominal muscles.

Heat Exhaustion—symptoms include feeling tired, weak and dizzy; headache, nausea and possible vomiting. Heavy perspiration; skin feels moist.

Heat Stroke—symptoms include feeling tired, weak and dizzy. Skin feels hot and dry—even under armpits; appears red and flushed. May become delirious and unconscious. **This is a life threatening situation! Call 911.**

Reducing Your Risks

1. Drink lots of cool water, even more than you think you need, when the weather is hot and humid. (High humidity makes heat injuries more likely because perspiration does not evaporate from the skin as quickly; this causes the body to cool down more slowly.) Water is best; fruit and vegetable juices are good, too.

Drink at least a gallon of liquid a day (about 16 glasses) when the outside temperature is above 90 degrees and you are not in air-conditioned surroundings. This will mean drinking 1 ½ times as much liquid as your thirst signals you to drink.

Overweight people need even more water during summer than average weight people.

Do not drink beer or other alcoholic beverages, coffee, tea or other drinks containing caffeine because they cause you to lose fluid.

2. Maintain normal salt intake in your diet (1 ½ teaspoons or less per day). If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, ask your doctor about your salt intake.
3. Wear light-colored clothes that are loosely woven and absorbent. Cotton is best; it absorbs 40 percent of its weight in moisture. Most synthetic (manmade) materials trap body heat and are not absorbent. Wear a hat to shade your head.
4. Avoid outside activities during the heat of the day. If you are required to work outside, take frequent breaks and drinks of cool water. Do not run or do other types of energetic exercise during the heat of the day. Get wet, wear wet clothing, or bathe/shower as often as possible without drying yourself—this gives your body cooling system a boost.
5. If there is no air conditioning:
 - Use a fan.
 - Open windows wide to create as much cross-ventilation as possible.
 - If your apartment or home is shaded from the sun at certain times of the day, the windows should be open on that side, and the drapes/shades should be closed on the sunny side of your home or apartment.

- Avoid cooking.
- Go to a cool place, if possible, like the library, the senior center, the theater, or the shopping center during the heat of the day.
- Take frequent, cool baths or showers.

6. Realize that older people are more sensitive to heat and may easily suffer heat-related sickness. Also, anyone with diabetes, heart disease, arteriosclerosis, high blood pressure, or Parkinson's Disease is more sensitive to the effects of heat.

Reducing Your Risks During Physical Activity

To physically perform your best in hot weather, you must have an unlimited amount of water available to drink. You should:

- Drink two 8-ounce glasses of water, juice, or a sports drink 2 hours before physical activity (8 ounces equals one full measuring cup of fluid).
- Drink 4 to 8 ounces (½ to 1 full measuring cup of fluid) or more of water or a sports drink 5 to 10 minutes before physical activity.
- Drink 8 to 10 ounces of fluid, or as much as you can tolerate, every 15 to 20 minutes during heavy physical activity.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine—they may cause muscle cramping.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to maintain adequate amounts of sodium, calcium and potassium.
- Avoid taking salt tablets—most foods provide enough sodium.

Treating Heat-Related Problems

Heat Cramps

1. Rest in a cool, shaded place.
2. Drink cool water slowly (4 ounces, which is equal to ½ cup of fluid, every 15 minutes).
3. Stretch the muscle lightly.
4. Massage the area gently.

Heat Exhaustion

1. Rest in a cool, shaded place.
2. Lie down with feet raised 8 to 12 inches.
3. Loosen all clothing.
4. Drink cool water (4 ounces, which is equal to ½ cup of fluid, every 15 minutes).
5. Place cool, wet clothes on forehead and body.

Heat Stroke

1. Remove clothing.
2. Sponge with cool water.
3. Fan with a towel or cloth.
4. Call an ambulance and transport the person to the nearest emergency room immediately. **This is a life-threatening emergency.**

References:

- *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*, 2nd Edition. Human Kinetics, 1997.
- *Principles of Athletic Training*, 8th Edition. Mosby-Year Book, Inc., 1993.

For more information about heat-related problems, contact your local county Extension agent.

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Avoiding and Treating Heat-Related Problems

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