

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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Heat Stroke/Hyperthermia - To Much Heat Is Not Safe

Almost every summer there is a deadly heat wave in some part of the country. Too much heat is not safe for anyone. It is even riskier if you are older or if you have health problems.

The population most susceptible to heat strokes are infants, the elderly (often with associated heart diseases, lung diseases, kidney diseases, or on certain medications that make them vulnerable to heat strokes), and athletes, or outdoor workers physically exerting themselves under the sun.

Irene is retired, she loves to work in her garden. Because she has always spent hours outside, she thinks the heat and humidity of Midwestern summers don't bother her. Then last year an unusual heat wave hit her area. Every day the temperature was over 100° F, and



the humidity was at least 90%. Five days into the heat wave, her daughter Kim came over because Irene sounded confused on the phone. Kim found her mom passed out on the kitchen floor. The ambulance came quickly when called, but Irene almost died. She had heat stroke, the most serious form of hyperthermia.

It is important to get relief from the heat quickly. If not, you might begin to feel confused or faint. Your heart could become stressed, and maybe stop beating.

Hyperthermia-To Hot For Your Health

Being hot for too long can cause many illnesses, all grouped under the name hyperthermia:

Heat cramps are the painful tightening of muscles in your stomach area, arms, or legs. Cramps can result from hard work or exercise. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, but not those containing alcohol or caffeine.

Heat edema is a swelling in your ankles and feet when you get hot. Putting your legs up should help. If that doesn't work fairly quickly, check with your doctor.

Heat syncope is a sudden dizziness that may come on when you are active in the heat. Putting your legs up and resting in a cool place should make the dizzy feeling go away.

Heat exhaustion is a warning that your body can no longer keep itself cool. You might feel thirsty, dizzy,



(Over)

Heat Stroke. . . (Continued)

weak, uncoordinated, nauseated, and sweat a lot. Resting in a cool place, drinking plenty of fluids, and getting medical care should help you feel better soon. If not, this condition can progress to heat stroke.

Heat stroke is an emergency — it can be life threatening! You need to get medical help right away. Getting to a cool place is very important, but so is treatment by a doctor.

What are heat stroke symptoms?

Symptoms of heat stroke can sometimes mimic those of heart attack or other conditions. Sometimes a person experiences symptoms of heat exhaustion before progressing to heat strokes.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion may include nausea, vomiting, fatigue, weakness, headache, muscle cramps and aches, and dizziness. However some individuals can develop symptoms of heat stroke suddenly and rapidly without warning.

Different people may have different symptoms and signs of heat stroke. But common symptoms and signs of heat stroke include:

- high body temperature
- the absence of sweating, with hot red or flushed dry skin
- rapid pulse
- difficulty breathing
- strange behavior
- hallucinations
- confusion

What Should I Remember?

Headache, confusion, dizziness, or nausea when you're in a hot place or during hot weather could be a sign of a heat-related illness. Go to the doctor or an emergency room to find out if you need treatment. To keep heat-related illnesses from becoming a dangerous heat stroke, remember to:

- Get out of the sun and into a cool place — air-conditioning is best.
- Offer fluids, but avoid alcohol and caffeine. Water and fruit and vegetable juices are best.
- Shower or bathe, or at least sponge off with cool water.
- Lie down and rest, if possible in a cool place.
- Visit your doctor or an emergency room if you don't cool down quickly.

- agitation
- disorientation
- seizure
- coma

The most important measures to prevent heat strokes are to avoid becoming dehydrated, and to avoid vigorous physical activities in hot and humid weather. If you

have to perform physical activities in hot weather, drink plenty of fluids (such as water and Gatorade), but avoid alcohol, coffee, and tea which may lead to dehydration. Take frequent breaks to hydrate yourself. Wear hats, and light colored, and light and loose clothes.

Source: www.webmd.com

