

A-5 Heat Ailments

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are the least serious heat ailment and can usually be treated by the sufferer. People who do physical work or who exercise in the heat may experience heat cramps at the end of the day.

Symptoms

- ◆ Pale, cool, and moist skin
- ◆ Weakness and nausea
- ◆ Fast pulse (sometimes)
- ◆ Heavy sweating
- ◆ Tingling in arms and legs
- ◆ Dull pain in abdomen
- ◆ Painful muscle cramps in arms, legs, or stomach

What To Do

1. Get out of the sun and heat.
2. Drink cool fluids with one teaspoon of salt dissolved in each quart of fluid.
3. Avoid strenuous activity for at least 12 hours.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion takes at least a few hours to develop. It results from water and salt loss due to sweating in the heat. In most cases, sufferers remain conscious and can help themselves. Sometimes, however, the sufferer passes out and needs outside assistance.

Heat Exhaustion Symptoms

- ◆ Cool, moist skin
- ◆ Normal or lower-than-normal temperature
- ◆ Rapid, weak pulse
- ◆ Headache, nausea, fatigue, giddiness, loss of appetite, vomiting, or diarrhea
- ◆ Thirst
- ◆ Fainting or faint feeling
- ◆ Muscle cramps (sometimes)

What To Do

If you are conscious:

1. Get out of the heat and sun.
2. Place your feet up and your head down.
3. Drink cool fluids with one teaspoon of salt dissolved in each quart of liquid.
4. Take oral temperature every half hour. Call for help if temperature rises above 104° F.

5. Rest for 1 to 3 days.

If you find the sufferer unconscious:

1. Follow steps 1 and 2. Do not try to give an unconscious sufferer fluids.
2. Call for medical help.
3. Take body temperature, if possible.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is not as common as the other two heat ailments but it is more dangerous. Often, it is a result of an person's inability to perspire. The symptoms of heat stroke appear rapidly, especially the high body temperature, which can cause severe damage if not controlled. Since the sufferers may become unconscious or confused, they may be unable to help themselves and must have outside help.

Heat Stroke Symptoms

- ◆ Hot, dry, reddened skin
- ◆ Temperature of 104° to 106° F, sometimes higher
- ◆ Rapid pulse
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Confused, agitated, or peculiar behavior
- ◆ Dizziness, fainting, or unconsciousness
- ◆ Abdominal pains or diarrhea
- ◆ Staggering or loss of balance

What To Do

1. Cool the sufferer.
2. Call an ambulance or get medical help.
3. If you can, take sufferer's temperature every half hour until it cools to 102° F.
4. When body temperature decreases to 102° F, cover the patient with a thin blanket or sheet to prevent chilling.

People at Greater Risk of Heat Ailments

- ◆ People with chronic diseases such as: diabetes, hardening of the arteries, heart disease, kidney disease, stroke, high blood pressure, respiratory ailments
- ◆ Overweight people
- ◆ Infants
- ◆ Athletes or military personnel in strenuous training
- ◆ Alcoholics
- ◆ People with circulatory problems
- ◆ People taking medication for various conditions such as: heart problems, ulcers, high blood pressure, tension, nausea or vomiting, Parkinson's disease

- ◆ People taking antihistamines, tranquilizers, laxatives, or sleep-inducers
- ◆ People who lose large amounts of water because they have the flu (diarrhea or vomiting) or because they have been working hard in intense heat and sweating heavily
- ◆ People with a fever caused by the flu or immunization shots
- ◆ People who can't sweat properly due to cystic fibrosis or other problems

Avoiding Heat Ailments

Get used to the sun gradually.

During the first hot spell of the year, don't work too long or hard in the sun. Gradually increase the amount of time in the sun each day.

Keep cool—avoid the heat and direct sun as much as possible.

- ◆ Limit activity during the most intense heat (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.).
- ◆ Take 5 to 10 minute breaks every half hour if you are working in the heat.
- ◆ Try to stay in the shade when you are outdoors.
- ◆ Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.
- ◆ Wear a wide-brimmed hat in the sun.

Prepare yourself for the heat.

Drink more fluids such as water, iced tea, vegetable juice. Avoid alcoholic beverages. —

- ◆ Eat some salty food (unless you are on a low-salt diet).
- ◆ Watch for the warning signs of heat ailments when the temperature goes above 90° F such as nausea, dizziness, tiredness, fever, and flushed dry skin.
- ◆ Keep in touch with friends and relatives if you live alone.