

## HEAT STRESS (SUN STRESS)

Hot weather triggers a variety of medical emergencies. Even healthy people should take it easy during extremely high temperatures, and those with respiratory and other health problems must be especially careful. Stay out of the sun as much as possible. Drink extra fluids, but avoid alcoholic beverages. Alcohol can cause dehydration.

The best ways to prevent a sun stress emergency are:

**Anyone can suffer a heat illness, but by taking a few simple precautions, they can be prevented:**

- Condition yourself for working in hot environments—start slowly then build up to more physical work. Allow your body to adjust over a few days. If you can, work in the cool hours of the day or evening.
- Wear a hat or cap, keep the neck covered and wear loose fitting clothing. Light colored clothing will reflect away some of the sun's energy.
- **Drink lots of liquids (preferably water) and drink often.** Don't wait until you're thirsty, by then, there's a good chance you're already on your way to being dehydrated. Electrolyte drinks are good for replacing both water and minerals lost through sweating. Never drink alcohol, and avoid caffeinated beverages like coffee and pop.
- Eat a healthy diet. Eat small meals more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increase metabolic heat.
- Take a break if you notice you're getting a headache or you start feeling overheated. Cool off for a few minutes before going back to work.
- Wear light weight, light colored clothing when working out in the sun.
- Take advantage of fans and air-conditioners.
- If you can, work in the cool hours of the day or evening.
- Get enough sleep at night.

With a little caution and common sense, you can avoid heat illnesses.

The greatest amount of heat loss from the body occurs at the head. This is why it is important to wear a hat or cap in the sun.

Electrolytes are crucial for the proper functioning of the body. Common electrolytes are:

- Calcium
- Sodium
- Potassium

Heat-related injuries fall into three major categories:

- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion
- Heatstroke

**Heat cramps** are muscular pains and spasms that occur when the body loses electrolytes during profuse sweating or when inadequate electrolytes are taken into the body. They usually begin in the arms, legs or abdomen, and often precede heat exhaustion.

Treatment for heat cramps is to rest in the shade, get near a fan, spray the person with water and massage the cramp.

**Heat exhaustion** is a medical emergency. When a person is suffering from heat exhaustion, they will perspire profusely and most likely will be pale.

Heat exhaustion is best treated by taking the patient to a cool place, applying cool compresses, elevating the feet, and giving the patient fluids.

**Heat stroke** is the worst heat-related injury. The brain has lost its ability to regulate body temperature. The patient will be hot, reddish and warm to the touch. Their temperature will be markedly high and there will be no perspiration. This is a medical emergency, call 9-1-1.

The emergency care of heatstroke is to cool the body as quickly as possible. One of the best methods for cooling the body during a heat emergency is to wrap the patient in cool, wet sheets.

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