

It's Hot Out There: Know Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke Signs

Heat Exhaustion

This condition often occurs when people exercise (work or play) in a hot, humid place and body fluids are lost through sweating, causing the body to overheat. The person's temperature may be elevated, but not above 104°F.

Heat exhaustion symptoms

- Often pale with cool, moist skin
- Sweating profusely
- Muscle cramps or pains
- Feels faint or dizzy
- May complain of headache, weakness, thirst, and nausea
- Core temperature elevated-usually more than 100°F-and the pulse rate increased

Home care is appropriate for mild forms of heat exhaustion.

- For mild cases of heat exhaustion
 - Rest in a cool, shaded area
 - Give cool fluids such as water or sports drinks (that will replace the salt that has been lost); salty snacks are appropriate as tolerated
 - Loosen or remove clothing
 - Apply cool water to skin
 - Do not use an alcohol rub
 - Do not give any beverages containing alcohol or caffeine

Heat Stroke

This medical condition is life-threatening. The person's cooling system, which is controlled by the brain, stops working and the internal body temperature rises to the point where brain damage or damage to other internal organs may result (temperature may reach 105+°F).

Heat stroke symptoms

- Unconscious or has a markedly abnormal mental status (dizziness, confusion, hallucinations, or coma)
- Flushed, hot, and dry skin (although it may be moist initially from previous sweating or from attempts to cool the person with water)
- May have slightly elevated blood pressure at first that falls later
- May be hyperventilating
- Core temperature of 105°F or more

Heat stroke (do not attempt to treat a case of heat stroke at home, but you can help while waiting for medical assistance to arrive.)

- Call 911 immediately
- Move the person to a cooler environment, or place him or her in a cool bath of water (as long as he or she is conscious and can be attended continuously)
- Alternatively, moisten the skin with lukewarm water and use a fan to blow cool air across the skin
- Give cool beverages by mouth only if the person has a normal mental state and can tolerate it