

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

People most at risk for heat illness are those improperly hydrated, who work, exercise, or play sports outside, taking diuretics, or with medical conditions that cause poor circulation.

THREE LEVELS OF HEAT ILLNESS

HEAT CRAMPS: painful muscle spasms caused by fluid and electrolyte loss.

Symptoms:

- Pain
- Muscle spasm

Treatment:

- Move the person to a cool place to rest
- Have the person sip a drink containing electrolytes and carbohydrates
- Stretch and massage the area to relieve cramps
- Continue resting until the person is fully recovered. They can then resume normal activity

HEAT EXHAUSTION: The body becomes unable to effectively cool itself due to excessive sweat loss and inadequate fluid replacement

Symptoms:

- Cool, Moist, Pale, Ashen (Gray), flushed skin.
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Fatigue

Treatment:

- Move the person to a cooler location.
- Loosen or remove restrictive, excess clothing and equipment
- Best practice to cool is cold water immersion, use ice towels or ice bags when not available.
- Slowly replace fluids with a cold commercial sports drink
- Monitor for change in signs and symptoms
- Make the person wait several hours after symptoms subside before resuming activity

HEAT STROKE: Most severe form of heat illness. Occurs when core body temperature is >104 and is life threatening.

Symptoms:

- Decreased mental status
- Vision impairments
- Hot skin that may be wet or dry or appear red or pale
- Vomiting and nausea
- Rapid, and shallow breathing
- Rapid or weak pulse
- Seizures

Treatment:

- Call 911
- Best practice to cool is cold water immersion, use ice towels or ice bags when not available.
- Monitor for changes.