

Heat-related Illness: What to Watch For

The impact of the heat can vary from person-to-person. It's important to know who is most likely to be affected and to know the signs of heat-related illness. The very young and very old are most susceptible, as are family pets.

“We all need to take proper precautions to safeguard against heat-related illnesses, which are very serious and even life-threatening.

When temperatures rise, be sure to watch out for others, as well as yourself:

- Check on elderly neighbors.
- Bring your children and pets inside.
- Make sure everyone stays hydrated.

If you are spending time outdoors, be aware of the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion is characterized by:

- Cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity).
- Headache.
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion.
- Nausea.
- The skin may or may not feel hot.

The later, more critical stage, heat stroke includes the same symptoms as heat exhaustion; however, they are often to a more extreme degree. They are characterized by high body temperatures, loss of consciousness and rapid, weak pulse or breathing.

There are a few things that are particularly important when dealing with the extreme occurrences of emergency heat stroke. Extreme heat stroke is very serious. It may lead to emergency care, long-term effects, and possible death. We are quickly going to run over some of the critical symptoms of an extreme heat stroke. They are:

- Extreme mental change that may include confusion, drowsiness, or uncontrollable irritability
- Temperatures that spike well above 105 degrees
- Uncontrollable vomiting
- Skin has gone dry and red
- Sweating has vanished

As you can see the symptoms have gone past the point of heat exhaustion and are incredibly important to address quickly. The first thing to do is call 911 or your emergency system. But don't stop there...every moment that you provide treatment to yourself or your child allows the professionals an easier and more productive job. Some of the emergency treatments to do before the EMT arrives include those that were listed above as well as:

- Applying ice packs to the groin, neck and armpits. These are the areas where blood vessels are closest

For Heat Cramps or Heat Exhaustion

- Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position.
- If the person is fully awake and alert, give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let him or her drink too quickly.
- Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as towels or wet sheets.
- Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number if the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness

to the skin surface

- Spray with cool water – but do not immerse the body in cool or cold water.
- Take temperature rectally very frequently.
- If breathing stops, apply rescue breathing.
- Do not give aspirin.
- Try to give 32 – 64 oz of water within two hours of the heat stroke.