Stages of Heat-Related Illness

Understanding the symptoms of heat-related illness, from the mildest to the most severe, is crucial for taking quick action to protect yourself and others.

Early Stages

Dehydration

- Feeling thirsty
- Dark yellow and strong-smelling urine
- Urinating less than 4x a day
- Dry mouth and/or chapped lips

What to do next

1. **Drink** water and eat water-based foods.
2. Move to a cooler area.
3. Reduce consumption of alcohol and/or sugary drinks.

Heat cramps

Muscular pains and spasms, usually in the abdominal muscles, arms, or legs

What to do next

1. **Stop** activity and rest in a cool place.
2. **Drink** water or a low sugar electrolyte sports drink.
3. **Stretch** the cramped muscle gently and hold the stretch for about 20 seconds, then massage the muscle.

*Call 911 if the person has heart problems, is on a low-sodium diet, or has cramps that do not subside within 1 hour.

Severe Heat-Related Illnesses

Heat exhaustion

- Heavy sweating
- Mild headache
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Muscle cramps

What to do next

1. **Stop** activity and rest in a cooler place. Move into the shade if outdoors or into an air-conditioned space if possible.
2. **Sip** half glass of water or low sugar sports drink every 15 minutes to rehydrate.
3. To **cool down**, loosen or remove tight clothing, including shoes and socks, and apply cold, wet cloths to the forehead or neck, or spray the body with water.

Call 911 immediately if the person refuses water, vomits, or loses consciousness.

Heat stroke

- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Fainting, or becoming unresponsive
- Fever
- Throbbing headache

Call 911 immediately. Heat stroke is a medical emergency.

Act Fast, Save a Life!

1. **Move the person to a cool area**, ideally with air conditioning or shade and grass. Be aware that the ground and objects in the sun can burn skin.
2. **Cool the person quickly** by applying water to their wrists, ankles, armpits, and neck, then fan them to cool major blood vessels. Apply ice packs to these areas if available.
3. **Do not force the person to drink water.**
4. Keep the person **lying down** on their side in recovery position in case of vomiting.
5. **Stay** with the person until emergency services arrives.

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