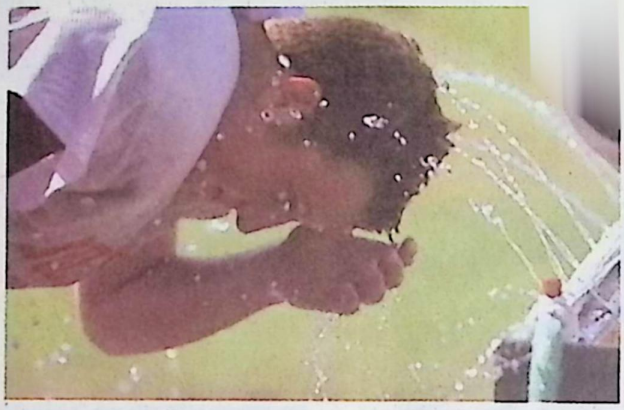


How to Deal with Extreme Heat

WITH the hot weather in full swing now we must take special care of our health to prevent dehydration and heat exhaustion. This is especially important for people who have to stay out in the sun for a long time. Here are some simple tips that can prevent both heat exhaustion and heat stroke, both potentially serious conditions resulting from overexposure to extreme heat. It is important to keep an eye on your own families and also on the elder population who may not know how to cope with the extreme heat.

What happens when we are exposed to extreme heat?

Normally our bodies cool down by sweating. With high temperatures and high humidity, sweat will not evaporate as quickly and the body will start to overheat. High body temperatures may damage the brain and other vital organs.

Who is at greatest risk for heat-related illness?

Those at greatest risk for heat-related illness include infants and children up to four years of age, people 65 years of age and older, people who are overweight, and people who are ill or on certain medications.

What is heat exhaustion?

Heat exhaustion is a serious illness caused by too much heat. It is often brought on by overexertion or profuse sweating in a hot, humid, poorly ventilated environment. During prolonged heat waves, the very young and the very old are also often at risk, even if they are not active. Luckily, if heat exhaustion is recognised and treated promptly, the effects can easily be reversed.

Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Feeling weak, faint or dizzy, with an accompanying headache or nausea
- Cold, clammy skin with ashen pallor
- Dry tongue and thirst
- Severe muscle fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Profuse sweating
- Physical collapse, with muscle fatigue and sometimes cramping

Treatment

The two basic steps in treating heat exhaustion are to replenish the body's lost fluids and to cool the body's temperature.

- Move the person into a cool place out of the sun.
- Loosen any tight-fitting clothing and remove any extra layers of clothing.
- Offer the person fluids such as water, fruit or vegetable juices, or sports drinks. Do not offer drinks that contain

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Risk Prevention

Certain health and lifestyle conditions can increase your risk of developing heat exhaustion. These include:

- Poor circulation, inefficient sweat glands and other changes in skin condition brought on by the normal aging process
- Recent or recurrent illness accompanied by a fever
- Drugs and medications that increase heat production by the body or affect the body's ability to regulate its temperature. These can include diuretics, laxatives, antihistamines, amphetamines and anti-depressants
- Living in a home without air conditioning or fans, excessive drinking of alcohol, overdressing or excessive overeating

General tips for the hot weather

You can't control the weather, but you can take these four steps to reduce your risk of heat exhaustion.

- During the spring and early summer months, acclimate your body to the increasing heat by gradually spending more time outdoors.
- Drink non-alcoholic fluids at regular intervals. As a general rule of thumb, drink before you are thirsty. If you must be outdoors working or exercising, drink two to four glasses of cool fluids every hour. Do not drink fluids that contain caffeine or large amounts of sugar. These actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Oral saline can replace the salt you lose in sweat.
- Avoid being outdoors during the hottest part of the day. If you like to run or play sports, schedule your workouts in the early morning hours or after sunset. If you don't have air conditioning, or can't get to a place that is air conditioned, stay on the lowest floor and keep the shades drawn and a fan running. Electric fans do provide comfort but will not prevent heat-related illness. Move to a cooler environment, take a cool shower or bath.
- If you must be outside, wear lightweight, light-colour clothing. Eat light; frequent small meals are better than a single heavy one.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say "broad spectrum") or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels).

Source: The Internet