

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges all Americans to take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses. People suffer heat-related illness when the body's temperature control system is overloaded, and the body can no longer cool itself.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion include: heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, and or fainting. The skin may be cool and moist. The pulse rate will be fast and weak and breathing will be fast and shallow. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke.

Seek medical attention immediately if symptoms are severe, or if the victim has heart problems or high blood pressure. Otherwise, help the victim to cool off, and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour. The best defense against heat-related illness is prevention. Staying cool and making simple changes in your fluid intake, activities, and clothing during hot weather can help you to remain safe and healthy.

Prevention tips:

- Increase your fluid intake -- regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you feel thirsty to drink fluids.
- Limit exercise in a hot environment, and drink 2-4 glasses of fruit juice or a sports beverage each hour.
- Avoid drinks containing caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar. Also avoid very cold beverages because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and in an air-conditioned environment. If air conditioning is not available, consider a visit to the shopping mall or public library for a few hours. Contact your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area.
- Electric fans may be useful to increase comfort and to draw cool air into your home at night, but do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device during a heat wave. When the temperature is in the high 90s or higher, a fan will not prevent heat-related illness. A cool shower or bath is a more effective way to cool off.
- If you must be out in the heat, try to plan your activities so that you are outdoors either before noon or in the evening.
- While outdoors, rest frequently in a shady area so that your body's thermostat has a chance to recover.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. When outdoors, a wide-brimmed hat will provide shade and keep the head cool.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Wear sunscreen to protect skin from the sun's harmful rays.
- If unaccustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment, start slowly pick up the pace gradually, and limit your exercise or work time.
- Check regularly on those at greatest risk of heat-related illness: *infants and children up to four years of age people 65 years of age or older people who are overweight people who are ill or on certain medications.*