

HEATSTROKE or HEAT EXHAUSTION**(Sunstroke)****BASIC INFORMATION****DESCRIPTION**

Illness caused by excess exposure to heat, not enough fluid intake, or a failure of the body's ability to regulate its temperature. It can affect all ages, but is more common in the elderly.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS*Heat exhaustion:*

- Dizziness, fatigue, faintness, headache.
- Skin that is pale and clammy.
- Pulse rapid and weak.
- Breathing is fast and shallow.
- Muscle cramps.
- Intense thirst.

Heatstroke:

- Often preceded by heat exhaustion and its symptoms.
- Skin that is hot, dry, and flushed.
- No sweating.
- High body temperature.
- Rapid heartbeat.
- Confusion.
- Loss of consciousness.

CAUSES

- Heat exhaustion is caused by a lack of fluid intake, a lack of salt intake, and a problem with the body's production of sweat. Sweat is what helps to cool the body.
- Heat stroke is caused by overexposure to extreme heat and a breakdown in the body's temperature regulation system. The body becomes overheated to a dangerous degree. The body's temperature can reach 107°F (41.7°C).

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Elderly persons.
- Excess alcohol use or drug abuse.
- Poor health or chronic illness, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease.
- Exercise or work in a hot, humid location. This can be indoors or outdoors.
- Loss of body fluids, from sweating and failure to drink enough fluids.
- Heavy, tight clothing.
- High fever.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing in hot weather.
- Drink water often; don't wait until you are thirsty.
- Drink extra water if you sweat a lot. If urine output decreases, increase your water intake.
- If you become overheated, open a window or use a fan or air conditioner. This helps sweat dry up, which cools the skin.
- Take precautions when going outside in hot weather.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Fast treatment usually brings full recovery in 1 to 2 days.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Can involve any major organ system (heart, lungs, kidneys, brain).
- Related to duration and amount of heat and to speed of treatment.

**DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT****GENERAL MEASURES**

- If someone with symptoms is very hot and not sweating: Cool the person rapidly. Remove their clothing, use a cold-water bath, or wrap in wet sheets. Get them to the nearest hospital. This is an emergency!
- If someone is faint but sweating: Lie the person down in a cool place. Give them cool water (not iced) to sip or a sports drink containing electrolytes. Get medical advice for proper care.
- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about the symptoms and activities. Usually no medical tests are needed for diagnosis.
- Medical treatment will depend on how severe the symptoms are. Fluids may be given through a vein (IV).

MEDICATIONS

Drugs are usually not needed for these disorders. Drugs may be needed for complications that develop.

ACTIVITY

- Rest with legs elevated while symptoms are present.
- Activity may be resumed after symptoms improve.

DIET

No special diet.

**NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF**

You or a family member has symptoms of heatstroke or heat exhaustion, or observe them in someone else. Call immediately! These conditions may be serious or fatal.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page