

Monthly
Wellness
SpotLight
by PSA



IN GOOD HEALTH

SUMMERTIME HEAT MAY LEAD TO HEATSTROKE!

With summer comes heat, and with heat, the increased chance of heatstroke. Heatstroke occurs when your body temperature rises to 104 F or higher. The first signs are heat cramps, fainting, and heat exhaustion.

Heatstroke requires emergency medical care. Left untreated, it may damage your brain, heart, and kidneys. The longer you are exposed to the heat, the higher your risk for serious complications and maybe even death.

Causes, Signs, and Symptoms

The most common causes of heatstroke:

- Prolonged exposure to the heat
- Strenuous activity in hot weather
- Too many clothes
- Alcohol consumption
- Dehydration

Eight common signs and symptoms of heatstroke:

- Body temperature of 104 F or higher
- Confusion or abnormal behavior
- No sweat—hot and dry or only slightly moist skin
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Flushed skin
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Throbbing headache
- Seizures
- Unconsciousness

Risk Factors

Anyone can develop heatstroke! The primary risk factors are excess heat exposure and not drinking enough water. As the heat index rises, relative humidity of 60% or higher impedes the ability for sweat to evaporate and interferes with our ability to cool our bodies. Other risk factors include:

- **Age**—infants and children up to age four and adults over 65 are at increased risk.
- **Health conditions** including Heart Disease, Lung Disease, Diabetes, Kidney Disease, Obesity, Alcoholism, Sunburn, and any conditions that cause fever

- **Medications** including antihistamines, diet pills, diuretics, sedatives, tranquilizers, seizure medicine, heart and blood pressure medications, and antidepressants

Emergency Care and First Aid

If you suspect someone is suffering from heatstroke, immediately take the person to the emergency room or call 911. Delaying care could be fatal.

While waiting for emergency personnel, get the person into the shade or indoors if you are able. Remove any excess clothing and cool the person as best as you can with cool water or ice/ice packs on the person's head, neck, armpits, and groin. A cool shower and a fan can also help.

Prevention

Monitor the heat index and stay indoors in the air conditioning when it's high. If you are at high risk, take extra precautions. If you must go outside, be sure to:

- Drink more fluids. The more you sweat, the more you lose valuable electrolytes, like salt. When working or exercising outside, it is recommended that you drink 24 ounces of fluid two hours before exercise or work and another eight ounces right before. Before increasing fluids, check with your doctor.
- Do not take salt tablets unless you talk to your doctor first.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing and a hat.
- Check your medications to make sure they do not put you at a higher risk.
- Prevent sunburn! Sunburned skin interferes with your body's ability to cool itself.
- Check your backseat. We all become distracted—make sure you are not leaving anyone in a hot car.
- Plan activities early in the morning or later in the day to avoid the peak, hottest part of the day, if possible.
- When going outside, allow your body to get acclimated to the heat before you begin strenuous activity.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol. Both can make you lose more fluids and put you at a higher risk.