

Beat the Heat: Preventing Heat Stroke

What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition in which the body temperature rises rapidly to 104 degrees F (40 degrees C) or higher and the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down.

How does it occur?

It usually happens after long exposure to hot temperatures when you're not used to a new climate. It can also be caused by working in an extremely hot environment, a high fever associated with illness, or exercising too strenuously. Overdressing, overeating, and drinking too much alcohol can be contributing factors.

What are the symptoms?

Before heatstroke, you may suffer from heat exhaustion. Symptoms of heat exhaustion are: confusion, fatigue, heavy sweating, weakness and faintness.

When your body can no longer keep your temperature normal, heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke. Symptoms of heatstroke are: dry skin, no sweating, muscle cramps, flushing, shallow breathing, rapid, weak pulse, and / or body temperature over 104 degrees F (40 degrees C).

How is it treated?

Emergency medical treatment is necessary. If you think someone has heatstroke, call 911 or a doctor immediately. People with true heatstroke will need to be hospitalized in most cases.

What can be done to help prevent heatstroke?

- Stay out of the hot sun, limit exposure, and wear a hat if working in intense sun.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing in hot weather.
- Drink extra water when you sweat, even if you aren't thirsty.
- Open windows, or use a fan or air conditioner to improve air circulation.
- Limit food intake to small meals, and limit alcohol intake and activity when it is very hot or when you're not used to a hot climate.

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