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Heat stroke and heat exhaustion pdf

With warm weather bearing down on much of the world due to rising temperatures and climate change, it's no wonder that meteorologists and physicians alike are often warning people about the danger of too much heat exposure. Precautions are taken to protect children, the elderly, and animals from the dangers of extreme weather. Exposure to excessive heat can cause heat exhaustion, which can lead to serious health concerns. Heat exhaustion is a series of symptoms caused by prolonged exposure to temperatures outside the body's comfort zone, usually during physical exertion. Heat exhaustion is one of three stages of heat illness: heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and finally heat stroke. Heat exhaustion can also happen when someone is not exercising but simply in high heat for a long period, such as during tanning or while gardening. milan2099 / Getty Images It's far better to prevent heat exhaustion from occurring in the first place, and there are several pragmatic ways to do this. They include: Staying hydrated in any heat, even when not exercisingAvoiding exposure to the sun or heat during the hottest part of the day. It is better to get any outdoor work done in the early morning or evening hours.Reading your body's cues and knowing when you begin to tire. Pollyana Ventura / Getty Images Heat exhaustion occurs in multiple internal phases. Exposure to heat puts stress on the body, causing it to (1) seek out cooler temperatures, (2) increase blood flow to the skin, and (3) evaporate excess water in an attempt to cool down. These are all normal functions, but when they fail to achieve the desired response, the body must react more drastically. It begins to lose salt and water and develop dehydration, high cardiac output, and decreased circulation. Eventually, the symptoms, such as circulatory shock and heart failure, become more severe and pose a danger to the person's life. ljubaphoto / Getty Images The symptoms of heat exhaustion can go unnoticed until they become dangerous. The initial symptoms include dehydration, fatigue, rapid but weak pulse, nausea, headache, and vomiting. Neurological symptoms such as dizziness and faintness can also occur. Addressing these symptoms quickly is vital to prevent one's condition from deteriorating. Jan-Otto / Getty Images Treatments from heat exhaustion can often be done at home, at least in the initial stages. The person should find a cooler area and end any physically demanding activity immediately. They should drink water with electrolytes and dress in light clothing. Severely overheated people can benefit from cold towels and a cool bath or show to lower the body temperature rapidly. If symptoms don't improve, consult a doctor. fladendron / Getty Images While there are not many records of heat exhaustion in medical history, there are plenty discussing heat stroke. In 24 B.C., Aelius Gallus lost a large part of his army to heat stroke while leading a campaign against Arabia. The ailment of his soldiers, later recorded by Roman senator Dio Cassius, is consistent with descriptions of heat stroke. Records also show the first U.S. Navy death was due to heat stroke. Diane Labombarbe / Getty Images Certain people are more at risk of developing heat exhaustion than others. These include: Children, who experience a greater heat transfer from the environment than adults.Older adults, whose cardiovascular systems often cannot take the strain of heat dissipation,Athletes, who exercise vigorously even in the heat, and,Outdoor workers, who have no choice but to be exposed to heat. Other groups include people with chronic illnesses, pre-existing conditions, people on medication, and those without access to properly ventilated and cooled homes. C5Photography / Getty Images There are two types of heat exhaustion: one that occurs when the body is depleted of salt and one when the body is depleted of water. They have similar symptoms and can both be treated by prompt electrolyte consumption. Plain water may only further drain sodium levels, so liquids with electrolytes are a better choice. Manit Sesekhao / Getty Images The terms heat exhaustion and heatstroke are often used interchangeably, but they are two different stages of heat illness. Heat exhaustion, if left untreated, turns into heat stroke and can have disastrous consequences. The symptoms of heat stroke include hot and dry skin, rapid shallow breathing, and organ and circulation failure. The condition can lead to death. If a person suspects they may have heat stroke, they should seek emergency medical care immediately. AntonioGuillem / Getty Images Animals can also experience heat exhaustion. Small pets like cats and dogs can develop heat exhaustion and then heatstroke within minutes of exposure. Pets should always be left in cool, air-conditioned areas because their bodies are unable to cool like huamsn. Pets are much more likely to go untreated for heat exhaustion and heatstroke symptoms, but the conditions are no less fatal. Proper precautions, such adequate water and cool surroundings, are vital to animals in dangerous heat. Kyril Gorlov / Getty Images Evaporation of sweat is an important cooling system that can efficiently remove heat. However, if exercise is done in a hot, humid environment, then sweat does not evaporate. This reduces the efficiency of this system and the person is subject to heat stroke. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition. Here are its symptoms:The core body temperature rises above 104 degrees F (40 degrees C)Sweating stopsHeart rate increasesRespiration increasesConfusion, dizziness, nausea and headache occurHeat stroke can cause a person to collapse, lose consciousness and even die. Emergency medical help involves these two steps: lowering the body temperature (removing clothing, spraying the person with cool mist, putting on ice packs, immersing the person in ice water) and replacing fluids, if possible.You can avoid getting heat stroke by wearing shorts and other loose clothing, drinking plenty of water or sports drink and exercising in cool weather (below 82 degrees F or 28 degrees C). If you are exposed to too much heat, your body works hard to keep your temperature constant. This can lead to you feeling generally unwell, lacking in energy and feeling dizzy or sick. Heatstroke happens when your body's normal mechanisms for regulating your temperature break down, and your temperature rises to more than 40°C. Heat exhaustion should be treated quickly to prevent it turning into heatstroke, which is a medical emergency.Anyone can experience the physical effects of excess heat, but people at highest risk include:Infants and toddlers.Elderly people.People who are physically active.People with chronic health conditions like diabetes or heart, lung or kidney disease.People taking 'water tablets' (diuretics - usually used for high blood pressure or heart failure), antipsychotic medication or recreational drugs like ecstasyPeople with tummy troubles like gastroenteritis or inflammatory bowel conditions like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis that can cause diarrhoea.Your body's internal processes work best when levels of water, body salts and temperature are just right. Your body has many mechanisms to keep your internal environment constant, regardless of what's going on outside. These processes are known as homeostasis.So when you become hot, your body's protection mechanisms kick in. You sweat to lose heat; your urine becomes more concentrated to preserve water; and your body tells you that you need to drink more and get out of the sun. If you stay in the heat, your body starts to struggle.Key signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion include:Passing less urine (which is very dark).Dizziness and feeling faint.Tiredness.Headache.Feeling sick, lack of appetite, and cramping stomach pain.Muscle cramps in legs and arms.Rapid pulse.Clammy, pale skin and profuse sweating.Fluid and a cool environment are key to treating heat exhaustion. If you think you're showing signs, immediately.Move to a cool room.Take off as much clothing as possible, particularly tight clothes.Take a cool bath or shower.If there are no bathing facilities, sponge down with cool water.Put on a fan if possible (if your skin is damp, the evaporation will cool you down quicker).Lie down if possible.Drink as much non-alcoholic fluid as you can.Seek medical help if you're not feeling better within about half an hour.Sunstroke is a form of heatstroke. The only different is that it's caused specifically by being exposed to too much direct sunlight. Symptoms and treatment are exactly the same as for heatstroke - they're both medical emergencies.The only added issue is that there's a risk of severe sunburn on top of other complications. Blistering of the skin is a sign of severe sunburn - sponge the skin gently with cool clean water while waiting for medical help.In heatstroke, your body can no longer cope. The normal mechanisms to keep your body cool give up, and your temperature soars to over 40°C. Other symptoms include:Severe, throbbing headache.Feeling very sick and being sick (vomiting).Fast pulse (which can be weak or very strong and 'bounding' along).Shallow, rapid breathing.Very hot, flushed skin.Weak or cramping muscles.No sweating despite being very hot.Dizziness, feeling faint or fainting.Confusion and agitation.Seizures.Sometimes collapse and loss of consciousness.Left untreated, heatstroke can lead to swelling of your vital organs, including your brain.Heatstroke is a medical emergency and can cause serious damage to kidneys and other vital organs if not treated promptly. Someone experiencing heatstroke is unlikely to be able to treat themself. If you think someone has heatstroke, immediately:Call 999/112/911 for an ambulance. While waiting:Move them to a cool place and lay them down.Stay with them at all times.Remove as much of their clothing as possible.Wet their skin with cool water; then fan them.If possible, put them in a cool bath or shower.For a young, healthy person who has developed heatstroke from vigorous exercise in hot weather, consider applying ice packs to their armpits, neck and back.Put them in the recovery position if they lose consciousness.Heat exhaustion often occurs as a result of direct sun exposure. To find out more about avoiding harm from excess sun exposure, see the separate leaflet called Sun and Health.However, it is important to remember that it is possible to develop heat exhaustion even when you are not in direct sunlight. To avoid damage from heat as well as sun:Keep your fluid intake up. Caffeinated drinks in moderation can contribute to your fluid intake - about 400 mg a day in total (eight cups of tea or four cups of coffee in total). However, you should avoid drinking more caffeinated drinks than this, and top up with water.Do not drink alcohol, which dehydrates you and reduces your awareness of the warning symptoms. It also impairs your ability to take early steps to move yourself to somewhere cooler and take steps to avoid heat exhaustion turning into heatstroke.Avoid strenuous exercise in hot weather (especially between 11 am and 3 pm, when temperatures are usually highest).Wear loose clothes made from natural fibres such as cotton or linen, which allow your body to evaporate heat readily by sweating.Keep your home cool by pulling curtains in daytime. If the weather outside is hotter than inside, keep windows closed and use a fan. When the weather outside cools down, particularly at night, keep windows open.Take regular cool showers or baths.If you are feeling hot, put a damp flannel on the back of your neck and keep changing it. As the water evaporates from your skin, it will cool you down.Remember that south-facing rooms with windows in direct sunlight are hotter than north-facing ones.Keep indoor plants which help cool the air as they evaporate water. With a record-breaking heat wave roasting the Pacific Northwest, it's important to not only stay relatively cool but to actively avoid experiencing heat exhaustion and the more serious heat stroke. Knowing the signs of both can help keep you and your friends and family safe.Heat stroke is a serious condition that can result in seizures, organ failure, and more. And before you get heat stroke, you'll experience a milder condition called heat exhaustion. Both conditions occur when the body overheats. Normally, our bodies try to cool us down by bringing hot blood from our core to the surface of the skin, where we radiate that heat into our environment. The evaporation that results from sweating also helps to cool our skin. We get into trouble when the environment is too hot or too humid for these mechanisms to cool us down.Who is at risk for heat illness?Heat stroke in healthy people is often associated with exercise, since working out raises your core temperature. This is especially the case if you're not very fit, or if you're used to working out in cooler weather. As you get used to exercising in the heat, your body learns how to cool itself more efficiently.Things that increase the risk of heat exhaustion and heat stroke include: Exercising in high temperatures and humidity.Poor fitness.Being large (whether you're obese or very muscular).DehydrationWearing or carrying gear, like football pads or a hiking packDrinking alcoholUsing certain medications or supplements, including beta blockers and diuretics:Any disability or illness that makes it harder for you to get out of the heat or to cool yourselfSigns and symptoms of heat exhaustionHeat exhaustion occurs when your core body temperature is elevated, but not enough to involve your brain. If you or an overheated friend shows any sign of being confused, for example, assume it's heat stroke and get medical help right away. Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion may include, according to the CDC: DizzinessNausea and vomitingHeadacheFatigue or weaknessHeavy sweating Cold, pale, and clammy skinA fast, weak pulseIf you begin to feel these symptoms, start cooling yourself down right away: move to the shade or air conditioning, loosen your clothing, have a cold drink, and keep watch for any signs that you're feeling worse or not getting better. If you haven't recovered within an hour, seek medical help. Signs and symptoms of heat strokeHeat stroke occurs when the body's temperature is extremely high (over 104, taken rectally) and can affect the brain as well as the body.Heat stroke is a serious condition, so if you suspect it, get medical help right away. If you're at an event with medical staff (like if you're running a marathon or playing in a football game), alert them. Otherwise, call 911 or the emergency number for your area. Signs of heat stroke can include some of the symptoms above, like headache, dizziness, and nausea, plus: Confusion, irritability, or hallucinationPassing out or collapsingTrouble walkingSeizuresReddened skin, with or without sweatingYou can help the person cool down while you wait for help. Medical staff may decide it's best to cool the person down before transporting them to a hospital, but that depends on whether the person needs other medical treatment. The ideal way of cooling down a person with heat stroke is to put them in a tub of cold water with ice, and stir the water constantly. If that's not possible, a cold shower or a cold hose can work, or apply icy wet towels to the person's body and swap them out every three minutes or whenever they stop being icy cold.This post was originally published on July 6, 2018 and was updated June 2021 to reflect current information and style.

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