

Heat Exhaustion

Children are at an increased risk of heat related illnesses including dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and heat cramps

Fact

- Heat exhaustion is an illness that occurs from too much activity or too much time in the heat
- Children absorb more heat from the environment because they have a greater skin surface area to body mass (weight) ratio than adults. Therefore, the smaller the child, the faster that heat is absorbed.
- Humidity plays an important role in heat exhaustion
- Dehydration can lead to heat exhaustion
- If left untreated, heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke

Spotting the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Signs of dehydration (refer to the “Dehydration” fact sheet on the AIA Academy web site)
- Intense thirst
- The skin may be cool, clammy, pale, and/or moist because sweating may or may not occur
- Nausea
- Feeling chills and dizziness
- Feeling faint or weak
- Headache
- The heart rate may be fast and/or weak
- Low blood pressure
- Breathing may be fast and shallow
- Disorientation
- A low grade fever, normal core body temperature, or below normal core body temperature

If left untreated, these signs and symptoms can progress to heat stroke!

What you can do if you think that the person has heat exhaustion

- Bring the child out of the heat into a cool location
- Have the child drink cool water or a sports drink containing electrolytes (do not give the person an iced drink)
- Lay the child down and elevate the feet above the child’s head
- Wet the child’s skin with a towel or sponge immersed in cool water
- Cool the person by fanning or lightly spraying with cool water



- Loosen the child's clothing

Avoiding and preventing heat exhaustion

- Avoid becoming dehydrated while participating in physical activity
- Outside activity should be reduced as the air temperature and humidity levels rise
- If experiencing any of the signs or symptoms listed above, stop activity, get out of the sun/heat, rest in a cool place, and drink fluids to replenish the water lost through perspiring
- Take frequent breaks to cool down and rest
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine and sugar because they do not replenish the body's fluid levels properly
- If possible, wear light-colored, loose-fitting, absorbable clothing during physical activity