

Heat Stroke

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

Fact

- If left untreated, heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke
- Heat stroke is clinically defined as a core body temperature greater than 105 degrees F accompanied by hot, dry skin and central nervous system abnormalities, such as delirium, convulsions, or coma

What causes heat stroke and why is it a problem?

What makes heat stroke much more severe than heat exhaustion and potentially life-threatening is that the body's normal mechanisms for dealing with heat stress, such as temperature control and perspiration, are lost. Therefore, the main sign of heat stroke is an elevated body temperature- generally greater than 104 degrees F.

Spotting the signs and symptoms of heat stroke

Heat stroke can be a life-threatening condition! At the first sign of any of the following symptoms, immediately seek medical help. Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- The skin may be hot, flushed, and dry
- Perspiration stops
- Body temperature may rise from normal levels to dangerous levels, with core body temperatures rising to 102 degrees F to greater than 106 degrees F
- Rapid heart rate
- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Feeling confused, delirious, or disoriented
- Elevated or lowered blood pressure
- Perspiration stops
- Irritability
- Convulsions
- Feeling faint
- Unconsciousness, fainting, or coma

If fever becomes greater than 102 degrees F, fainting, confusion, or seizures may occur. Dial 911 or seek emergency medical assistance.

What you can do if you think the person has heat stroke

- Immediately seek medical assistance by calling 911
- Bring the child out of the heat into a cool location
- Cool the child by covering him or her with damp sheets or by spraying him/her lightly with cool water.
- Fan the child to circulate cool air over his/her skin



Avoiding and preventing heat stroke

- 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