

CARDIO PARTNERS

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HEAT RELATED ILLNESSES

Heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are conditions caused by overexposure to heat, loss of fluids, and electrolytes.

HEAT CRAMPS

Heat cramps are the least severe of the heat-related illnesses. They are often the first signals that the body is having trouble with the heat. They are painful muscle cramps and usually occur in the legs and abdomen. Think of them as a warning of a possible heat-related illness.

To care for heat cramps, help the person move to a cool place to rest. Provide an electrolyte and carbohydrate-containing fluid such as a commercial sports drink, fruit juice, or milk. Water may also be given. Lightly stretch the muscle and gently massage the area.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is a more severe condition than heat cramps. It often effects athletes, firefighters, construction workers, and factory workers. It also effects those who wear heavy clothing in a hot, humid environment. Signals of heat exhaustion include cool, moist, pale, ashen or flushed skin; headache; nausea; dizziness; weakness; and exhaustion.

To care for heat exhaustion, get the person out of the heat and move them to a cooler environment with circulating air. Loosen or remove as much clothing as possible, and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets, taking care to remoisten the cloths periodically. Spraying the person with water and fanning them can help as well. If the person is conscious and is able to swallow, you may provide them small amounts of a cool fluid such as commercial sports drink or fruit juice to restore fluids and electrolytes. You may also give them milk or water. Give the person about 4 oz every 15 minutes. Let the person rest in a comfortable position, and be sure to watch them carefully for any changes in their condition.

HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is the least common but most severe heat-related illnesses. It usually occurs when people ignore the signs of heat exhaustion. Heat stroke develops when the body systems are overwhelmed by heat and begin to stop functioning. Heat stroke is a serious medical emergency. Signals of heat stroke include extremely high body temperature, red skin that can either be dry or moist, changes in consciousness, rapid or weak pulse, rapid/shallow breathing, confusion, vomiting, and seizures.

HEAT STROKE: WHAT TO DO UNTIL HELP ARRIVES

Rapidly cool the body by immersing the person up to the neck in cold water or douse or spray the person with cold water

Sponge the person with ice water-doused towels over the entire body; frequently rotating cold, wet towels

Cover with bags of ice

Apply rapid cooling methods for 20 minutes or until person's conditions improve

Give care to other conditions that may be found

Please be sure to refer to your companies' safety manual for specific heat-related issues