

Don't be Sidelined by the Heat

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The Three Types of Heat Illness:

All heat illnesses are caused by dehydration and excessive loss of salt and fluids. The mildest form of heat illness is known as **heat cramps**, which occur when athletes do not drink enough fluids while exercising. **Heat exhaustion** is a more serious injury that is triggered by excessive sweating and inadequate fluid replacement. **Heatstroke** is the most serious heat illness and can be life threatening. During heatstroke, the body's sweating mechanisms shut down, the skin becomes hot and dry and the body becomes depleted of fluids.

How to Prevent Heat Illness:

- Drink plenty of water when participating in all sports activities, even if you don't feel thirsty. By the time you do get thirsty, it might be too late.
- Take many breaks during activities in hot weather.
- Participate in your activity in the morning or early evening when the temperatures are cooler. It's important to avoid the sun's most potent heat rays between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Eat citrus fruits or bananas, especially if you are participating for longer, because they are rich in potassium and sodium.
- On the other hand, you should avoid drinking sodas that contain caffeine because they actually work to dehydrate you faster.
- Certain supplements such as creatine are known to cause cramping and should be avoided as well.
- Wear lightweight and light-colored clothing that is made of porous materials.

Some Additional Tips for Staying Hydrated:

- Cool water is the best fluid to keep you hydrated during workouts or events that last an hour or less. Sports drinks containing 6% to 10% carbohydrates are useful for longer events. Most sports drinks should be diluted with approximately 50% water.
- Drink small amounts of fluid frequently, rather than large amounts less often.

- Drink cold beverages to cool your core body temperature.
- If you have the opportunity, weigh yourself after exercising, and drink 2 to 3 cups of water for every pound lost. Your body weight should be back to normal before the next workout.
- Pay attention to the amount and color of your urine. You should excrete a large volume that is nearly colorless. Small amounts of urine or dark yellow-colored urine can indicate dehydration.

What to Do if You or Someone You Know is in Trouble:

If you are suffering from overexposure to heat or believe someone else is, take steps immediately. If the symptoms include cramping or mild fatigue, the two basic steps are to replenish the body's lost fluids and to cool the body's temperature. Here are some good tips:

- Move to a cool place out of the sun.
- Loosen any tight-fitting clothing and remove any extra layers of clothing.
- Drink fluids, such as water or sports drinks. Do not offer drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine. Try to drink about one half glass of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Try to cool off by sponging with cool water, or by applying cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets.
- In most cases, symptoms should improve within a few minutes.

If symptoms do not clear up quickly, or if a person is seriously fatigued, cramping, disoriented, or beginning to lose consciousness, call for emergency medical assistance immediately.



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