

How to Recognize and Treat Heat Exhaustion and Heatstroke

CORE ACTION MESSAGE

- Cool down the body as quickly as possible.

Heatstroke

The signs of heatstroke in a person are hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. A person experiencing heatstroke can have a very high body temperature—sometimes as high as 105°F (41° C). If the person was sweating from heavy work or exercise, the skin may be wet; otherwise, it will feel dry.

Heatstroke is a life-threatening situation. If you suspect someone is suffering from heatstroke, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number immediately. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the person's body—immerse it in a cool bath or wrap it in wet sheets and fan it. Watch for signs of breathing problems. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the person refuses water, is vomiting, or exhibits changes in the level of consciousness, do not give him or her anything to eat or drink.

Do not give liquids that contain alcohol or caffeine because they can cause further dehydration, making conditions worse.

Heat Exhaustion

The signs of heat exhaustion in a person are cool, moist, pale, or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. A person experiencing heat exhaustion may have a normal body temperature, or it is likely to be rising.

If you suspect someone is suffering from heat exhaustion, move the person to a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets dipped in water. If the person is conscious, give him or her cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Let the person rest in a comfortable position, and watch carefully for changes in his or her condition.

Do not give liquids that contain alcohol or caffeine because they can cause further dehydration, making conditions worse.

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are muscle spasms that are caused by excessive sweating that results in a deficiency of salt. Although not as serious as heat exhaustion or heatstroke, heat cramps sometimes precede them. If someone is suffering from heat cramps, move the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes.

Do not give liquids that contain alcohol or caffeine because they can cause further dehydration, making conditions worse.

Heat Stroke in Animals

Animals are also susceptible to heat stroke, or hyperthermia, which is considered an emergency as it is with people. Signs in animals include excessive panting; increased body temperature,