

Additional Information

What to Do In the Event of Heat Illness:

If you suspect that someone is suffering from a heat-related illness, **respond immediately** by taking the following actions:

- Get the person out of the sun and into an air-conditioned or other cool place.
- Offer fluids such as water, fruit and vegetable juices, but avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.
- Encourage the individual to shower, bathe or sponge off with cool water.
- Apply a cold, wet cloth to the wrists, neck, armpits, and/or groin, places where blood passes close to the surface and the cold cloth can help cool the blood.
- Urge the person to lie down and rest, preferably in a cool place.
- If heat stroke is suspected, call 9-1-1 and/or seek medical help immediately.

While **heat cramps and heat exhaustion** may be present in mild degrees, you should always contact a doctor or seek emergency medical attention if the symptoms of these conditions are severe or worsen with time.

Heat stroke is a true medical emergency. If a person has the symptoms of heat stroke, you should notify emergency services (911) immediately.

What is HEAT INDEX?

The heat index is a measurement of how hot it feels when the relative humidity is combined with the effects of the air temperature. It tells you how it feels outside in the shade. It is not a measurement of the outside temperature.

- A heat index of 90°F/ 32°C or above is dangerous.



Public Health
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Understanding Heat Illness



Harford County

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“Healthy People in a Healthy Environment”

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What is Heat Illness?

Heat related illnesses occur when your body can not keep itself cool. The body normally cools itself by sweating. As the sweat evaporates from the skin, it lowers body temperature. On hot, humid days, moisture in the air keeps body sweat from evaporating fast enough. When this happens, body temperature can rise and make you feel sick.

Who is at Risk?

Anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, but some people are at greater risk than others:

- Infants and young children
- People over the age of 65
- People with certain health conditions such as mental illness, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

How to Prevent Heat Illness:

- Stay indoors as much as possible when the heat index is high
- Wear light-colored, loose fitting clothing
- Drink plenty of water and stay away from drinks with caffeine.
- Take frequent breaks during outdoor activities (every 15-20 minutes).

Types and Treatment of Heat Illness?

Heat Cramps: Short, severe cramps in the muscles of the leg, arm or abdomen which can happen during or after heavy exercise in extreme heat. Heavy sweating uses up the body's supply of salts, which causes the cramps. Heat cramps also may be a symptom of heat exhaustion.

Treatment– Stop all activity and sit quietly in a cool place. Drink water, a sports drink, or other drinks with no caffeine or alcohol. Rest for a few hours after the cramps go away. Get medical help if you still have cramps after one hour.

Heat Exhaustion: Occurs when a person spends time in a hot environment without drinking enough fluids. Symptoms include extreme thirst, fatigue, weakness, clammy skin, nausea or vomiting, and rapid breathing.

Treatment– Drink water or other cool drink with no alcohol or caffeine, rest and take a cool shower or bath. Go to an air-conditioned environment if possible and wear lightweight clothing.

Heat Stroke: The most serious heat-related illness occurs when a body temperature rises too rapidly, to as much as 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. It can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided. Symptoms include red, hot, and dry skin, no sweating, and rapid, weak pulse.

Treatment– Get the person to a cool area and call 911 for an ambulance. Cool the person as quickly as possible with a cool bath/shower, water from a hose or wrap the person in a cool, wet sheet until body temperature drops to 101-102° F. Give the person water or other drink that does not have alcohol or caffeine.

Hot Weather Tips

Drink plenty of fluids, such as water and fruit juice, to prevent dehydration. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Drink 2-4 glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids each hour when working or exercising in a hot environment. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and overly sweetened drinks.

Avoid direct sunlight by staying in the shade and wear sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

Avoid using salt tablets unless your doctor told you to take them.

Stay in air-conditioned areas when possible. If your home is not air-conditioned, consider visiting a shopping mall or public library or stay with family or friends who have air conditioning. Electric fans may provide comfort, but will not prevent heat-related illnesses on very hot days.

NEVER leave pets or children in a car, even with the windows cracked.

Check on elderly relatives or neighbors at least daily, and make sure they have a cool place to live during extreme heat.

Take it easy when outdoors. Athletes and those who work outdoors should take short breaks when feeling tired. Work or play during the morning or evening when it is cooler.