

Activity Health Tip #1: HEAT ILLNESSES

The weather is beautiful, the sun is shining and it is **HOT, but are you aware of the dangers?**

-Although everyone is susceptible to heat illness it affects people differently- Physically fit, acclimatized, well hydrated people are more heat tolerant while the elderly and children are more likely to suffer from heat illness. Remember, dehydration does not only occur when you are exercising in the heat. You can become dehydrated when doing other things such as spending a day at the beach, working in the yard, visiting a theme park or any other activity that requires prolonged exposure to heat. Heat illness causes disabling complications related to excessive heat stress.

-Dehydration-

A process that results in below-normal levels of fluid in the body that occurs when the amount of body fluid that is lost is greater than the amount of fluid that is replaced. Drink water or sports drinks (not caffeinated or alcoholic beverages) before, during and after exercise. How much you need to drink depends on how big you are and how hot it is. Refer to the NATA position statement on fluid replacement for details.

-Heat Exhaustion-

The most common type of heat illness. It is caused by decreased blood volume due to dehydration. Characterized by dizziness, headache, nausea, profuse sweating, cool/clammy skin, rapid/weak pulse, body temperature elevated, although not to the extent found with exertional heat stroke (likely between 102 and 104 degrees F). To treat, remove from hot environment and cool as quickly as possible.

-Heat Cramps-

Painful spasms of the skeletal muscle caused by dehydration. Prevented by proper prehydration and relieved with gentle stretching, ice and increased fluid consumption.

-Heat Stroke-

The least common but most serious, even fatal.

Caused by:

- 1) the body's cooling system has completely shut off or
- 2) blood volume is so low that the person stops sweating and goes into shock

Characterized by: disorientation, unconsciousness, no sweating, hot/dry skin, increased body temperature, rapid/ strong pulse.

Treatment requires rapid cooling and immediate transportation to the hospital.

Here are some tips on how to reduce the likelihood of becoming dehydrated:

- 1) Drink fluids before, during and after exercise or prolonged heat exposures.
- 2) Check the color of your urine to see if fluid intake is adequate.
Clear/ light colored urine indicates proper hydration.
- 3) Avoid caffeine and alcohol
- 4) Take frequent breaks

For more information, visit: www.nata.org

This Activity Health Tip from the National Athletic Trainers' Association is intended to prevent injuries and promote health and safety of physically active people. Certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are medical professionals who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses that occur to athletes and the physically active.

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