



PATIENT CENTERED CARE NEWSLETTER: SUMMER HEALTH HAZARDS

HEAT-RELATED CONDITIONS

Heat exhaustion results from spending too much time in the heat. Even if not directly in the sun, a person can lose too much fluid staying outdoors too long on a hot day or spending too much time in an overly hot house. When exposure to extreme heat is combined with strenuous physical activity, the risk of heat exhaustion becomes even greater.

Symptoms: Dizziness, Nausea, Light-headedness, Severe headache, Cool, clammy skin, Heavy perspiration, Shallow breathing, Muscle tremors

Prevention: Drink extra amounts of liquids to replace body fluids lost through perspiration. Water, fruit juices or fruit-based drinks, such as lemonade, are preferable to tea, soft drinks, coffee or alcohol. Beverages that contain caffeine or alcohol often result in more frequent urination, which increases the body's loss of fluids. Stay indoors in a cool place as much as possible; Schedule strenuous activity during morning or evening hours when the temperature is cooler; Pace yourself when outdoors and take frequent water breaks in the shade or coolest place available; Wear lightweight, loose fitting clothing that does not interfere with the evaporation of perspiration

If these symptoms occur, lay the person on his back in the coolest nearby place, loosen any tight clothing, lower his head slightly, raise his feet and get medical attention immediately by DIALING 9-1-1.

Heatstroke is caused by overexposure to direct sunlight, with or without physical activity. Just sitting or lying too long in the sun can result in heatstroke. Heatstroke occurs most often in the spring and early summer, before the body adapts to higher temperatures. High humidity can increase the risk. Heat exhaustion does not always precede heatstroke. To avoid heatstroke during the hot summer months, stay out of the sun as much as possible and keep cool – preferably in an air conditioned place. If air conditioning is not available, use fans or open windows to circulate the air. (However, keep blinds or curtains closed when sunlight is coming directly in the windows.) Take frequent cold baths or showers and try to avoid cooking or baking during the hottest part of the day.

Symptoms: Headache, Red, dry face, Skin hot to touch, Body temperature of $>105^{\circ}$ F, Strong pulse, Loss of consciousness, Seizures, Irregular heartbeat.

If any of these symptoms occur, place the person in a semi-sitting position to reduce the amount of "hot" blood going to the head. Choose a spot in the shade or indoors, loosen tight clothing, flood the head and body with COLD water and get medical attention immediately. If the person has a seizure, protect him or her from striking objects and DO NOT put anything in the mouth. The most important treatment for heatstroke is to rapidly cool the victim with cold water or ice.

Go immediately to the nearest shaded or cool place and sit or lie down. If the symptoms are not relieved within a few minutes,

or if they become worse, seek medical attention immediately by DIALING 9-1-1.

Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms – usually in the abdomen, arms or legs – that affect people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture. The low salt level in the muscles causes the painful cramps. Heat cramps also may be a symptom of heat exhaustion.

If medical attention is not necessary, take these steps:

- Stop all activity and sit quietly in a cool place
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside
- Seek medical attention for heat cramps if they do not subside in one hour

If you have heart problems or are on a low sodium diet, get medical attention for heat cramps.

MOSQUITOES

Most people bitten by a mosquito experience mild or no symptoms. To prevent mosquitoes from entering your home, be sure door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair. If you are outdoors, use mosquito repellent applied sparingly to exposed skin and clothing according to label directions. Bug “zappers” do little to repel mosquitoes. To eliminate potential mosquito breeding sites near your home:

- Discard items that can hold small amounts of water.
- Empty water in ornamental items once each week.
- Drain or fill in low spots in the ground that hold water.
- Keep drainage ditches cleared of brush and other excess vegetation.

Natural preparations and concoctions: Various plant juices, extracts and oils have been used for centuries for repelling insects. These include eucalyptus and wintergreen oil, citronella, garlic, cedar, and pine tar. One possible natural insect repellent is a product called Bite Blocker, made using a base of geranium and coconut oils with the addition of soybean oil and may last several hours between applications.

Modern chemical insect repellents: The most commonly used insect repellent that works, and works well, is DEET (DEET or N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide). Products containing DEET are available under a large number of brand names including Deep Woods Off and Bens 100. DEET should not be applied over cuts, wounds or irritated skin.

BEE, WASP AND HORNET STINGS

A sting from a bee, wasp, hornet or ant usually results in nothing more than a painful swelling that disappears in a matter of hours. However, some people suffer allergic reactions to these kinds of stings. Symptoms of allergic reactions include dizziness, headaches, abdominal cramps or extreme nausea. Other warning signs of an allergic reaction include breathing difficulties and hives or swelling in an area of the body other than where the sting occurred. If the stinger remains in the skin, remove it by gently scraping away or by gently teasing it out with a clean pointed instrument. Do not squeeze; this may inject more venom into the skin. Thoroughly wash stings, and all insect bites, with soap and water. Apply an antiseptic anti-inflammatory ointment or cream, or a paste made of baking soda and water, to relieve itching and to prevent infection. If more serious symptoms occur, especially those indicating an allergic reaction, *seek medical attention promptly*. Be watchful when cooking, eating, and drinking outdoors, especially during yellow jacket season, which heightens in late summer. Check for insects on food and open drink containers before eating and drinking. Keep food covered.

Follow these tips to discourage the attention of bees, wasps and hornets:

- Avoid scented products such as perfume, hair spray, suntan lotion, cosmetics, deodorant, shaving lotion, etc.

- Do not wear brightly colored and patterned clothes
- Do not go barefoot, especially through vegetation
- Do not swat at bees and yellow jackets with bare hands. Move slowly and steadily, and gently brush the insects off
- Do not sit on or handle wet towels, washcloths, etc., without first making sure no insect is drinking the moisture