



Heat Exhaustion is Preventable

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Heat exhaustion is the result of your body overheating and is one of three heat-related syndromes. These are: heat cramps which are the mildest, heat exhaustion which is moderate, and heat stroke which is the most severe. Some of the symptoms of heat exhaustion may include heavy sweating and a rapid pulse. This is caused when the body is exposed to high temperatures, particularly when there is high humidity and strenuous physical activity. Heat exhaustion is the precursor of the very life-threatening condition of heat stroke, but you can prevent heat exhaustion.

The symptoms of heat exhaustion can come on either very quickly or develop after a few days of prolonged exposure to the heat and humidity. One symptom that is associated with heat exhaustion is while you are in the heat, your skin is cool and moist with goose bumps. A person may also feel faint, dizzy, and fatigued. You also may have muscle cramps, nausea or even headache. If you think that you have heat exhaustion, you need to stop all activity and rest. Get out of the heat, move to a cooler place, and drink lots of water to stay hydrated or even have some sports drinks available.

Risk factors include:

- Young children (less than 4 years old). The body's ability to regulate the temperature is not yet developed in young children.
- Older adults (over age 65). Age, medications or even illness put the elderly at risk.
- Be aware of the medications that you take. Some of the medicines that are out there to treat high blood pressure or heart problems can inhibit the body's ability to regulate the heat.
- Obesity. Excess weight can also inhibit your ability to control the body's temperature.
- If you are not used to the heat and you go to a warmer climate for a vacation, moving from a cool area to a high-heat area can also play a factor because the body is not used to those kinds of temperatures.

Below are some of the ways that you can prevent heat exhaustion and other heat-related illnesses.

- Wear loose clothing that is lightweight and light colored.
- Avoid getting sunburned.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Find a cooler place to do your activities.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking medications to see if those medications will affect you in the heat.
- Let your body acclimate to the heat. If you travel to someplace hot or have a heat wave, it will take time for your body to get used to the heat.
- It is best not to engage in strenuous exercise or activities during hot weather. However, if you do, take plenty of breaks, replenish your fluids, and let your body get used to the temperature to help regulate that.

If you have any questions, talk to your doctor or health specialist and they can help with these things. With heat exhaustion, your body temperature can rise as high as 104 degrees. If left untreated, it can lead to heat stroke which is a life-threatening emergency. Seek immediate medical attention at that time to avoid any further complications.