Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly people, people with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Recognizing Heat Exhaustion

Warning signs of heat exhaustion include the following:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

The skin may be cool and moist. The victim's pulse rate will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke. Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following occurs:

- Symptoms are severe.
- The victim has heart problems or high blood pressure.

Otherwise, help the victim to cool off, and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than 1 hour.

What to Do

Cooling measures that may be effective include the following:

- Cool, nonalcoholic beverages, as directed by your physician
- Rest
- Cool shower, bath, or sponge bath
- An air-conditioned environment
- Lightweight clothing

Heat Cramps | Heat Exhaustion | Heat Rash
Heat Stroke | Sunburn

Heat Related Illness | Links | Bibliography | Print Version

Extreme Heat Home | FAQ's | Tips on Preventing and Managing Heat

Air Pollution and Respiratory Health
Asthma
Division of Laboratory Sciences
Emergency and Environmental Health Services
Environmental Hazards and Health Effects

Global Health Office
Health Studies
Mold
Preventing Lead Poisoning in Young Children
Vessel Sanitation - Sanitary Inspection of International Cruise Ships

NCEH Home | Programs | Publications | Contact Us | Privacy | About NCEH
CDC Home | CDC Search | Health Topics A-Z

This page last reviewed March 30, 2002

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Environmental Health