

# Health Tips

Your Good Health Information From eDocAmerica

with

Dr. D


 Printer Friendly


**Click Here!**

to forward this  
Health Tip to a friend

## Health Tip: Preventing Heat-Related Illness

During the years 1979 to 2003, heat-related illness resulted in 8,015 deaths in the United States. This is more than from hurricanes, lightning, floods, and earthquakes combined during this same time period. Since these deaths are preventable, it is important to be aware of the factors that place people at risk and what actions can be taken to prevent heat-related illness or death.



Heat illness occurs when the body is unable to compensate for hot conditions and properly cool itself. Heat-related illness represents a continuum from the mildest type, heat cramps, to the life-threatening medical condition, heat stroke.

Heat cramps, are painful spasms, usually affecting the muscles of the abdomen, arms or legs. Loss of electrolytes (sodium, potassium, etc.) during periods of heavy sweating is thought to be the cause. The next most serious type of heat illness is heat exhaustion. This is a signal that the body is getting too hot, accompanied by heavy sweating, dizziness, rapid pulse, nausea and weakness. With heat stroke, the body becomes unable to control its temperature, which can rise to 105 degrees or higher. Typically, a change in mental status from confusion to seizure or coma occurs with heat stroke. Without prompt medical attention, heat stroke can cause permanent damage to the brain and other internal organs.

The following measures can help to prevent heat-related illness:

- **Stay hydrated.** During hot weather, it is important to increase your fluid intake and is best to not wait until you are thirsty to begin drinking. It is best to drink plain water or a sports drink, avoiding alcoholic or caffeine-containing beverages that can have a dehydrating effect. As a rule of thumb, it is a good idea to drink two to four glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids each hour when working or exercising in a hot environment
- **Dress appropriately.** When outdoors, wear lightweight, light colored



If you wish to [unsubscribe](#) from any eDocAmerica mailings, please click on the image above.

### Register Now

If you have not yet used eDocAmerica to communicate with our physicians, we urge you to give it a try. Email us about this or

any other topic or question you have!



Visit the  
eDocBlog



Forget your  
Password?



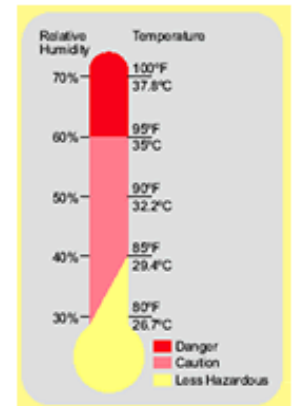
Login  
Here

We want to  
hear from you!



clothing. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat will reduce the amount of heat transferred to your head from the sun. When indoors, wearing as little as possible will help you stay cooler. Also, be sure to wear sunscreen when going outside.

- **Allow time to adjust to the heat.** Similarly to becoming acclimatized to being at high altitude, some increased tolerance to exercising or working in the heat can occur. This process may take a few weeks while the body makes certain adjustments such as expansion of the blood volume and decreasing the amount of electrolytes lost in the sweat. During this period of adjustment, it is best to begin activities slowly and progress gradually.
- **Schedule outdoor activities during cooler periods.** Vigorous outdoor activities are best done during the cooler times of the day - before 10 AM and after 6 PM. Staying in the shade will reduce the effects of solar radiation on the body.
- **If possible, stay indoors.** During periods of high heat and humidity, it may be best to minimize the amount of time outdoors. When exercising, consider going to an air-conditioned gym or walking in an air-conditioned mall. For those who do not have air conditioning in their homes, going to a public facility, e.g. library, shopping mall, etc., will help you stay cooler upon returning home.
- **Monitor those at high risk.** Two age groups are most susceptible to heat--the very young and the old. Infants and children are highly sensitive to the effects of high temperatures. They should never be left in a parked car in the summer, even if the windows are open. People 65 years of age or older may not compensate for heat stress efficiently and are less likely to sense and respond to change in temperature. Additionally, people with chronic illnesses, especially heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications, including some antihistamines, antidepressants, and blood pressure medications, may be affected by extreme heat.



Symptoms associated with mild-to-moderate severity heat illness include dizziness, muscle weakness or cramps, nausea, rapid heart rate and dehydration. When heat illness is recognized in its initial stages and addressed through measures such as getting out of the sun and into a cool location, replenishing fluid losses and resting, the more severe types of heat illness can be avoided. For impending heat stroke symptoms such as high body temperature (105+); hot, red, dry skin; rapid, weak pulse; confusion and rapid shallow breathing, medical help should be sought immediately.

---

**Have you ever used eDocAmerica?**

To register, just [Click Here](#) and follow the simple directions. The entire process should take less than 5 minutes.  
You'll be glad you did.



11719 Hinson Road, Suite 130 Little Rock, Arkansas 72212

Toll Free 1-866-525-eDoc (3362) [www.eDocAmerica.com](http://www.eDocAmerica.com)

Copyright 1999-2009 eDocAmerica. All rights reserved. Patent Pending. [\[click here to unsubscribe\]](#)