

## Tips and First-Aid Procedures

The summer months are upon us once again. Although the warm weather is welcomed by most, it can be deadly if treatment for the adverse effects of heat is not understood or utilized. The following article explains how heat can adversely affect the body and provides first-aid tips for three types of heat emergencies, including: heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke.

The body has a built-in mechanism to regulate a normal internal temperature. This process begins when heat is released through the blood vessels, resulting in sweat. As external heat and physical activity increase, so does the sweating process. When fluid intake is adequate, the sweating process cools the body successfully. However, excessive sweating combined with a lack of adequate fluid intake can result in muscle cramps, heat rash, heat stress or heat exhaustion.

The symptoms of these dangerous conditions include: dry, pale skin; irritability; dizziness; weakness; headache; nausea; rapid pulse; convulsions; or lack of consciousness. If not treated quickly, these conditions could result in death.

## First-Aid for Heat-Related Emergencies

### HEAT CRAMPS

Move the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Stretch the affected muscle lightly and administer a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give the person liquids containing alcohol or caffeine. These types of liquids dehydrate the body further, thus making the condition worse.

## HEAT EXHAUSTION

Move the person out of the heat and into a cooler place. Remove or loosen any tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, administer cool water to drink. Be sure the person drinks the water slowly. A half glass of cool water should be given to the person every 15 minutes.

Once again, do not give the person liquids containing alcohol or caffeine. As the person rests comfortably, watch for any sudden changes in his/her condition.

## HEATSTROKE

If the person is suffering from heatstroke, get emergency help immediately by calling 911 or your local emergency number. Heatstroke is a potentially deadly situation. Move the person to a cooler place and quickly begin cooling the body by immersing the person in a cool bath, or wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. Keep the person lying down and continue cooling the body.

Monitor the person's breathing and watch for any signs of problems. If the person refuses water, is vomiting, or experiences changes in the level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat.

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