

Heat Exhaustion

What is Heat Exhaustion?

Heat exhaustion is more serious than, and a cumulative effect of, heat stress. You are at risk for heat exhaustion when you are physically active during extreme heat. There are two types of heat exhaustion: primary water loss heat exhaustion, and salt depletion heat exhaustion. Although these two result from different things, the symptoms are very similar.

Symptoms

Symptoms include intense thirst, fatigue, weakness, anxiety, headaches, giddiness, nausea, paleness, vomiting, and cramps. Signs to look for if you suspect someone may be suffering from heat exhaustion include impaired judgment, dehydration, agitation, hysteria, and incoordination.

Prevention

Prevention of heat exhaustion is very similar to the prevention of heat stress. All of the same precautions should be taken to prevent heat exhaustion. It is very important to keep the body hydrated by drinking plenty of water. You should avoid extreme physical exertion during the hottest times of the day between 10 am and 3 pm. Also, if you notice any signs of heat stress, you should perform the necessary measures before heat exhaustion has a chance to set in.

Related Heat Disorders: Heat Stroke

If heat exhaustion is not treated properly it may lead to heat stroke, which is the worst heat related injury. Heat stroke occurs when the brain has lost its ability to regulate body temperature. A person suffering from heat stroke will not be sweating and their skin will be very dry, reddish, and hot to the touch. Other symptoms are strong fast pulse, very high temperature, and confused, strange or angry behavior. If not treated properly, heat stroke can lead to coma, brain damage, seizures, and even death. Preventing heat stroke can be achieved by following the same precautions used to avoid heat stress and heat exhaustion.

Emergency Response

I. Heat Exhaustion – If you or someone you are working with is overcome by the heat, call University Police at 3333 then perform the following to make the victim more comfortable:

1. Move the victim to a cool place where their clothes should be loosened and soaked with cool water.
2. Lay the victim down with their feet elevated.
3. Give the victim plenty of fluids

II. Heat Stroke – If a person is suffering from heat stroke immediately call 911 and University Police at 3333 then perform the following to make the victim more comfortable

1. Move the victim to a cool place where their clothes should be loosened and soaked with cool water.
2. Lay the victim down with their feet elevated.
3. Give the victim plenty of fluids. (Note – never attempt to give fluids to an unconscious person)

For further information about heat related injuries contact the office of Environmental Health & Safety at 3796