



Summer Heat

North American summers are hot; most summers see heat waves in parts of the United States. East of the Rockies, they tend to combine both high temperature and high humidity, although some of the worst heat waves have been catastrophically dry. Heat disorders generally have to do with a reduction or collapse of the body's ability to shed heat by circulatory changes and sweating or a chemical (salt) imbalance caused by too much sweating. Your body temperature rises and heat-related illness may develop when the body heats to quickly to cool itself safely, or when you lose too much fluid or salt through dehydration or sweating. Heat disorders share one common feature: the individual has been in the heat too long for his or her age and physical condition. Studies indicate that, other things being equal, the severity of heat disorders tend to increase with age. Conditions that cause heat cramps in a 17-year-old may result in heat exhaustion in someone 40, and heat stroke in a person over 60. Sunburn, with its ultraviolet radiation burns, can significantly retard the skin's ability to shed excess heat. Acclimatization has to do with adjusting sweat-salt concentrations, among other things. The idea is to lose enough water to regulate body temperature, with the least possible chemical disturbance/salt depletion. Below are a list of heat disorder symptoms:

SUNBURN: Redness and pain. In severe cases swelling of skin, blisters, fever, headaches.

First Aid: Ointments for mild cases if blisters appear and do not break. If breaking occurs, apply dry sterile dressing. Serious, extensive cases should be seen by physician.

HEAT CRAMPS: Painful spasms usually in the muscles of legs and abdomen. Heavy sweating. **First Aid:** Firm pressure on cramping muscles or gentle massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue water.

HEAT EXHAUSTION: Heavy sweating, weakness, skin cold, pale and clammy. Pulse thready. Normal temperature possible. Fainting and vomiting. **First Aid:** Get victim out of sun. Once inside, the person should lay down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air conditioned room. Offer sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue water. If vomiting continues, seek immediate medical attention.

HEAT STROKE (or sunstroke): High body temperature (106° F or higher). Hot dry skin. Rapid and strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness. **First Aid: HEAT STROKE IS A SEVERE MEDICAL EMERGENCY. SUMMON EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE OR GET THE VICTIM TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY. DELAY CAN BE FATAL.** White waiting for emergency assistance, move the victim to a cooler environment. Reduce body temperature with cold bath or sponging. Use extreme caution. Remove clothing, use fans and air conditioners. If temperature rises again, repeat process. Do not give fluids. Persons on salt restrictive diets should consult a physician before increasing their salt intake.

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