



Heat Exhaustion and Dehydration

Heat Exhaustion

Exposure to extreme heat and humid conditions causes the body's cooling mechanism to become very inefficient (sweat cannot evaporate fast enough to cool the body). It then becomes relatively easy to overheat. Also, our ability to sweat diminishes as we become dehydrated. Heat exhaustion symptoms include fatigue, exhaustion, nausea, lightheadedness, and possibly heat cramps. Heat exhaustion usually comes on several hours after exertion and dehydration.



Prevention

- Consume enough water to replace body fluid lost. Eat salty foods and or drink electrolyte solution.
- Drink because you know you should, not because you feel thirsty.
- Maintain a pace that allows you body to adapt to the heat.
- Take breaks during the hottest part of the day – the middle afternoon hours.
- Wear cotton clothing that lets hair pass through and sweat evaporate.
- Wear a brimmed hat or cap to shade you heat-sensitive head.





Dehydration

Working, exercising, or any form of exertion in extreme heat can cause dehydration. We usually assume that our thirst mechanism will protect us from dehydration – that if we become dehydrated, it will tell us by triggering intense thirst until we drink enough fluids. *But, it is possible to lose fluid so quickly that the normal thirst mechanism is overwhelmed.* Sources of fluid loss are respiration, perspiration, urination, and defecation. The rate of loss from each of these will vary according to activity levels, air temperature, humidity and altitude. The most common cause of increased fluid loss is exercise and sweating. The effects of even mild dehydration are decreased coordination, fatigue, and impairment of judgment.

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Prevention

- Drink plenty of liquids, stay well hydrated, and eat salty snacks.
- Rest often, out of the hot environment.
- Wear clothing that allows evaporation and a brimmed hat or cap when exposed to the sun.



Combating Heat -- Rules of Thumb:

1. Stay well hydrated and eat salty snacks.
2. Rest often, out of the sun.
3. Wear clothing that allows evaporation and a brimmed hat or cap.
4. Give heat exhaustion patients lots of water with a teaspoon of salt per liter. Let them rest.
5. Cool heat stroke patients as rapidly as possible. Douse with water, fan, and massage extremities. Evacuate as soon as possible.