

# Heat Safety

ECBC Summer Safety Series

With the excitement of summer comes the onset of extreme heat. It is vital to understand the effects of summer heat and to take the proper precautions. Prolonged exposure to heat without proper care can lead to very serious health issues to include heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

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## Heat Cramps

### What is it?

Heat cramps are actually muscle spasms that generally manifest in the legs or abdominal muscles. This is most common after physical activity. Heat cramps result from excessive sweating, thereby reducing salt levels in the body.

### How do you treat it?

Upon experiencing heat cramps you should – drink cool water/sports drinks, rest in a shaded area and stretch out your affected muscles. If the issue does not subside within an hour, seek medical attention.

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## Heat Exhaustion

### What is it?

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses an excessive amount of salt and water. Symptoms are similar to those of the flu and can include severe thirst, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting and, sometimes, diarrhea. Other symptoms include profuse sweating, clammy or pale skin, dizziness, rapid pulse and normal or slightly elevated body temperature.

### How do you treat it?

It is imperative that those experiencing these symptoms be treated quickly, as this can elevate to heatstroke. Immediately move to a shaded or air-conditioned space, drink cool water, apply cool wet towels or better yet, take a cool shower.

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## Heatstroke

### What is it?

Heatstroke is the body's most adverse reaction to heat and is a very serious condition. It occurs when extreme heat exposure leads to the failure of the body's ability to sweat and the body temperature rises at an accelerated pace. This becomes dangerous within minutes as the rise in body temperature essentially begins to "cook" the brain and other vital organs. Unfortunately, heatstroke is most often fatal. The few who do survive, suffer from permanent damage to their body and major organs. Along with the rapid rise in body temperature, those with heatstroke can experience hot skin, a disoriented mental state ranging from confusion to coma and even seizures.

### How do you treat it?

Survival depends on the speed which excess heat is rid from the body. In this case, do not provide the victim with anything to drink and do not give them any aspirin or acetaminophen. The person should be reclined, but not flat, in a shaded area and call 911 immediately. If humidity is below 75%, spray the victim with water and fan them vigorously; if humidity is above 75%, apply ice to the body's hot zones such as the neck, armpits and/or groin.

# Top 10

## Basic Heat Safety Tips

- 1 Try to avoid prolonged direct sunlight; choose shaded areas if possible.
- 2 Take frequent breaks from being outdoors in extreme heat.
- 3 Stay hydrated; drink plenty of water and use juice or sports drinks to replace electrolytes.
- 4 Wear wide brimmed hats to avoid direct sunlight on your head and face.
- 5 Always wear sunblock, a minimum of SPF 30. Reapply sunblock every 2-3 hours.
- 6 Try to avoid outdoor activities during the hottest portion of the day, 11a.m. - 3p.m.
- 7 Wear loose, lightweight clothing and avoid dark colors.
- 8 Never leave children or pets unattended in a vehicle.
- 9 Avoid alcohol while in the heat as it contributes to dehydration.
- 10 Eat small meals/snacks and avoid excess protein intake as it increases metabolic heat.