

IT'S NOT JUST HOT... IT'S DANGEROUS!

High temperatures and humidity stress the body's ability to cool itself, and heat illness becomes a special concern during hot weather. There are two major forms of heat illnesses: heat exhaustion and heat stroke, with heat stroke being a life threatening condition.

Heat stroke occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down.

Body temperature may rise to 106 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within 10-15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.

Warning signs of heat stroke vary but may include:

- an extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees Fahrenheit, orally)
- red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- rapid, strong pulse
- throbbing headache
- dizziness
- nausea
- confusion
- unconsciousness

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of the water and salt contained in sweat. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly people, people with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion include:

- heavy sweating
- paleness
- muscle cramps
- tiredness
- weakness
- dizziness
- headache
- nausea or vomiting
- fainting

The skin may be cool and moist. The person's pulse rate will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow.

Take these precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses:

- Drink lots of liquids. Don't wait until you're thirsty! By then, there's a good chance that you're already on your way to being dehydrated. Electrolyte drinks are good for replacing both water and minerals lost through sweating. Never drink alcohol, and avoid caffeinated beverages like coffee and soda.
- Take frequent breaks, especially if you notice you're getting a headache or you start feeling overheated.
- Wear lightweight, light colored clothing when working out in the sun.
- Take advantage of fans and air-conditioners.

Polk County Health Department
1907 Carpenter Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50314
(515) 286-3798
www.polkcountyia.gov/health

