

Heat-Related Emergencies

Working, training, or playing in extreme heat can be dangerous. If a person doesn't take the proper care, exposure to extremely hot environments can lead to life-threatening medical conditions.

Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when a person loses water or fluids through heat exposure, too much exercise, illness (such as vomiting, diarrhea, and fever) or decreased fluid intake. Unless it is addressed early, dehydration may lead to life-threatening medical conditions such as shock. Signs of heat-related or environmental dehydration include

- Weakness
- Thirst or dry mouth
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Less urination than usual

Actions to Take: Dehydration

- If you suspect that a person is **dehydrated**, contact a healthcare provider right away.
- The best first aid for dehydration is **prevention**: encourage everyone to drink enough to stay hydrated.

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms, most often occurring in the calves, arms, stomach muscles, and back. Signs of heat cramps are

- Muscle cramps
- Sweating
- Headache

Heat cramps are a sign that heat-related problems may continue to get worse if the person doesn't take action.

Actions to Take: Heat Cramps

- Have the person rest and cool off.
- Have the person drink something with sugar and electrolytes, such as a sports drink or juice, or water if these aren't available.
- If the person can tolerate it, apply a bag with ice and water wrapped in a towel to the cramping area for up to 20 minutes.

Heat Exhaustion

A mild condition, such as heat cramps, can quickly turn into heat exhaustion. That's why it's important to recognize and give first aid for heat-related emergencies early. The signs of heat exhaustion are similar to those of heat stroke:

- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Feeling faint or fatigued
- Heavy sweating

Actions to Take: Heat Exhaustion

- Have the person lie down in a cool place.
- Remove as much of the person's clothing as possible.
- Cool the person with a cool water spray. If a cool water spray is not available, place cool, damp cloths on the neck, armpits, and groin.
- If the person is responsive and can drink, have the person drink something with sugar and electrolytes, such as a sports drink or juice, or water if these aren't available.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a dangerous, life-threatening condition. So it's important to begin cooling a person who might have heat stroke immediately—every minute counts.

For heat stroke, you should try to immerse the person in cool water immediately. If you can't immerse the person in water, try to cool them with a cool water spray. If the person starts behaving normally again, stop cooling them. If you keep cooling the person, it could lead to low body temperature.

Signs of heat stroke are

- Confusion
- Feeling faint or fatigued
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Seizure

Actions to Take: Heat Stroke

- Phone 9-1-1, and get the first aid kit and AED.
- Move the person from the hot environment, remove any excess clothing they might be wearing, and remind them to limit their physical activity.
- Put the person in cool water up to their neck, if possible, or spray them with cool water.
- If the person becomes unresponsive and is not breathing normally or is only gasping, give CPR.