

Heat Stroke Meeting Kit

WHAT IS HEAT STROKE?

Heatstroke is a medical emergency caused by your body temperature going too high. If you don't cool down quickly enough, you can die or have brain or organ damage.

- Heatstroke happens when you're very hot and your body doesn't cool itself properly
- Your temperature is usually over 104° F (40° C)
- Heatstroke can affect older people or young children who live without air conditioning
- Athletes and people working hard in high heat are also at risk for heatstroke
- If not treated, heatstroke can damage your organs, such as your brain, heart, and lungs
- Doctors cool your body and give you IV fluids

Call an ambulance right away if someone is having symptoms of heatstroke. While waiting for the ambulance, get the person out of the sun or heat. Cool the person down by soaking in cold water, such as in a lake, stream, or bathtub. If getting into cold water isn't possible, wet the person's skin with slightly warm water and blow air across the skin.

CAUSES OF HEATSTROKE

Exposure to a hot environment. In a type of heatstroke, called nonexertional (classic) heatstroke, being in a hot environment leads to a rise in core body temperature. This type of heatstroke typically occurs after exposure to hot, humid weather, especially for prolonged periods. It occurs most often in older adults and in people with chronic illness.

Strenuous activity. Exertional heatstroke is caused by an increase in core body temperature brought on by intense physical activity in hot weather. Anyone exercising or working in hot weather can

get exertional heatstroke, but it's most likely to occur if you're not used to high temperatures.

In either type of heatstroke, your condition can be brought on by:

- Wearing excess clothing that prevents sweat from evaporating easily and cooling your body
- Drinking alcohol, which can affect your body's ability to regulate your temperature
- Becoming dehydrated by not drinking enough water to replenish fluids lost through sweating

SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STROKE

- Headache
- Dizziness and light-headedness
- Seizures
- Reduced sweating
- Red, hot and dry skin
- Weak or cramped muscles
- Nausea and vomiting
- Irregular heartbeat
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Disorientation or confusion
- Loss of coordination
- Unconsciousness

COMPLICATIONS

Heatstroke can result in a number of complications, depending on how long the body temperature is high. Severe complications include:

- Vital organ damage. Without a quick response to lower body temperature, heatstroke can cause your brain or other vital organs to swell, possibly resulting in permanent damage.
- Death. Without prompt and adequate treatment, heatstroke can be fatal.

PREVENTION

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing. Wearing excess clothing or clothing that fits tightly Won't allow your body to cool properly.
- Protect against sunburn. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool itself, so protect yourself outdoors with a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Apply sunscreen generously, and reapply every two hours – or more often if you're swimming or sweating.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Staying hydrated will help your body sweat and maintain a normal body temperature.
- Take extra precautions with certain medications. Be on the lookout for heat-related problems if you take medications that can affect your body's ability to stay hydrated and dissipate heat.
- Never leave anyone in a parked car. This is a common cause of heat-related deaths in children. When parked in the sun, the temperature in your car can rise 20 degrees F (more than 6.7 C) in 10 minutes.
- It's not safe to leave a person in a parked car in warm or hot weather, even if the windows are cracked or the car is in shade. When your car is parked, keep it locked to prevent a child from getting inside.
- Take it easy during the hottest parts of the day. If you can't avoid strenuous activity in hot weather, drink fluids and rest frequently in a cool spot. Try to schedule exercise or physical labor for cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or evening.
- Get acclimated. Limit time spent working or exercising in heat until you're conditioned to it. People who are not used to hot weather are especially susceptible to heat-related illness. It can take several weeks for your body to adjust to hot weather.
- Be cautious if you're at increased risk. If you take medications or have a condition that increases your risk of heat-related problems, avoid the heat and act quickly if you

notice symptoms of overheating. If you participate in a strenuous sporting event or activity in hot weather, make sure there are medical services available in case of a heat emergency.

FINAL WORD

It is important to prevent heat illnesses before they become an issue in the workplace. Knowing the signs, symptoms, and treatment of heat illnesses especially heat stroke can save someone's life. When in doubt always call 911 to get an individual the proper treatment they need.