

# Heat Related Illness



With the return of warmer weather, Alberta Health Services EMS would like to remind citizens to stay safe in the heat and sun this summer. While children and the elderly can be more susceptible to the effects of heat, basic prevention measures should be taken by all to avoid a heat related illness during periods of hot and humid weather.

## Heat exhaustion

- Heat exhaustion can occur due to excessive fluid loss during periods of prolonged sweating in a hot and / or humid environment (indoors or outdoors).
- Patients may suffer headaches, weakness, fatigue, nausea / vomiting, thirst, chills, and profuse sweating.
- The patient is usually cold and damp to the touch and the skin may appear pale or dusky gray.

## Heat stroke

- Heat stroke is a medical emergency that requires prompt treatment. It can be fatal.
- It occurs when the body can't cool itself naturally (e.g. perspiration). The body's temperature will continue to rise to dangerous levels.
- Due to severe dehydration and the inability to sweat the patient may appear flushed and skin may be hot and dry to the touch.

## First aid

- First aid for all heat related illness begins with removing or sheltering the patient from the hot environment.
- Remove excess or tight fitting clothing and allow them to rest in a cool environment.
- If the patient is conscious and alert, provide suitable fluids such as water, juice, or a sports drink.
- If you are concerned, seek medical attention or call 9-1-1.

## Prevention

- Stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- Limit alcohol consumption as alcohol dehydrates you.
- Always wear a broad brimmed hat to keep the sun off your face and neck.
- Apply waterproof sunscreen with an SPF of 50+, especially for children. The sun's UV rays peak between 10am-4pm, even on cloudy days.