

HEAT RELATED ILLNESS / HEAT EXHAUSTION / HEAT STROKE

by

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People at risk include: The very young and the very old. Also the obese, dehydrated, sleep deprived, unacclimatised, inebriated (alcohol, or drug use), unusual exertion and inappropriate clothing.

Heat exhaustion occurs 1st, along a continuum to the more severe phenomenon of heat stroke.
Symptoms of heat exhaustion: Flu-like feeling, headache, loss of appetite with nausea, feeling dizzy and body weakness.

Signs of heat exhaustion: The patient will have a fast pulse, often over 90 beats per minute.

Their blood pressure can be low. (Note the weak, thready pulse) They might be sweating profusely.

Breathing rate is increased. (Rate is over 16-20 breathes per minute)

They will have a raised temperature. (37 deg – 40 deg)

They will look dehydrated.

WHAT TO DO NOW? : 1stly cease all exertion, and move the patient to a cool, shaded area and lie them down. Give them rehydration fluids to replace electrolytes (eg. Hydralyte, Powerade, Game)



If you think they are going to need intravenous fluids (Can't drink due to nausea and vomiting), call for help immediately. (Ambulance / Paramedics)

Most people, however do not need hospitalisation.

HEAT STROKE:

This is a much more severe condition, and the patient always needs to go to hospital.

Look for the triad of: 1. Hyperthermia (Temp 40/41 deg).

2. Neurological Abnormalities (Confusion, unsteady gait, drowsy and seizures)

3. Dry skin. (Lack of sweat).

Management of Heat Stroke:

These patients need to go to a hospital urgently.

Call for help / ambulance / paramedics. Treatment will initially be similar to heat exhaustion until more help arrives.

In addition remove most of the patient's clothes, and spray them with cool water, and then fan the skin to promote evaporation.

Ice packs can be applied to the neck, armpits and groin as well.

A scribe (person to take notes) will help the ER staff, and if you can find out about the patients.

Usual health status, current medications and allergies, it's a great help. Good luck!!

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