



Heat Related Emergencies

Heat-related emergencies are progressive conditions resulting from overexposure to heat. If recognized in the early stages, heat-related emergencies can usually be reversed. If not recognized early, they may progress to heat stroke, which is a life-threatening condition.

There are three types of heat-related emergencies:

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms that usually occur in the legs and abdomen. Heat cramps are the least severe of the heat related emergencies.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is an early indicator that the body's cooling system is becoming overwhelmed. Signals of heat exhaustion include:

- Cool, moist, pale, ashen, or flushed skin.
- Headache, nausea, dizziness
- Weakness, exhaustion
- Heavy sweating

Heat Stroke

Heat Stroke occurs when the body's systems are overwhelmed by heat and stop functioning. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition. Signals of heat stroke include:

- Red, hot, dry skin
- Changes in level of consciousness
- Vomiting

Care for Heat Related Emergencies

Take the following steps to care for someone suffering from a heat-related emergency:

- Move the person to a cool place
- Loosen tight clothing
- Remove perspiration soaked clothing
- Apply cool, wet towels to the skin
- Fan the person
- If the person is conscious, give small amounts of cool water to drink.
- Call 911 if the person loses consciousness or does not improve.

*Adapted from American Red Cross: First Aid/CPR/AED for the Workplace. 2006. The American National Red Cross.

