

# Heat Related Illnesses

## **What is a heat related illness?**

Normally, the body has ways of keeping itself cool, by letting heat escape through the skin, and by evaporating sweat. If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, the victim may suffer a heat related illness.

## **What are the causes of a heat related illness?**

- Heat Exhaustion – Typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a warm, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating.
- Heat Stroke – The victim's temperature control system stops working.

## **Symptoms of heat exhaustion include**

- Very hot skin that feels 'flushed'
- Heavy sweating
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion
- Nausea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion
- Urinating less often and much darker urine than usual

## **Symptoms of heat stroke include**

- High body temperature
- Skin may still be moist, or you could stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry
- Rapid heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Muscle cramps
- Confusion
- Lack of co-ordination
- Fits
- Headache
- Loss of consciousness

**If any of the above symptoms are encountered activity should be stopped and medical advice sought.**

## **How can I prevent heat related illness?**

- Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light coloured clothing.
- Wear a hat, apply sunscreen and stay in shade where possible.
- Keep hydrated. Avoid drinks containing caffeine and alcohol.
- Eat cold foods, such as salad and fruit, which have high water content.
- Spraying water on your skin or placing a damp cloth on the back of your neck will help you keep cool.
- Take regular breaks when engaged in physical activity on warm days. If you recognize that you, or someone else, are showing the signals of a heat related illness, stop activity and find a cool place.