



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Burlington County Health Department

HOT TIPS ON STAYING SAFE IN THE HEAT

Information from the American Red Cross

Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition that can permanently damage the internal organs, especially the brain.

How can I prevent it?

The best way to prevent heat stroke is to drink large amounts of water regularly. Thirst is a poor indicator of dehydration, and in most cases heat stroke comes on suddenly. Other prevention strategies include:

- wearing loose fitting, light-colored clothes - light colors reflect more sunlight
- trying to relax in the shade during the hottest part of the day
- avoiding coffee and alcohol, especially beer, due to their fluid loss effect
- learning the technique of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation



How does it happen?

Working, playing, or exercising in hot weather without drinking enough fluids is one of the main causes of heat stroke. By not replacing lost fluids over a period of days, weeks, or even within the time frame of a few hours, heat stroke can occur. Without the right amount of fluids the core body temperature (the temperature of its internal organs) rises rapidly, and the body is unable to perform necessary functions.

Being active outdoors in humid weather increases the chances of heat stroke, as well. In dry weather, sweat evaporates quickly, which cools the body more efficiently than in humid weather. The humidity factor in weather forecasts indicates how one will actually feel outdoors, as opposed to just how hot it is.

Who's at risk?

People with the following conditions are especially prone to heat stroke, however, heat stroke can affect anyone:

- older age
- obesity
- alcoholism
- chronic illnesses like heart disease
- use of certain medicines such as diuretics and antihistamines
- use of some psychoactive drugs (alcohol, cocaine)

What are the symptoms?

- extremely high temperature
- rapid, strong pulse
- rapid, shallow breathing
- headache, nausea, dizziness
- confusion, strange behavior, may become extremely disoriented
- small pupils
- possible loss of consciousness and convulsions
- red, dry, very hot skin (sweating has ceased)



How can I help a victim?

If treating a heat stroke victim, the most important thing to do is call 911. While waiting for help to arrive, here are some tips on what to do:

- Remove victim to cooler location, out of the sun
- Loosen or remove clothing and immerse victim in very cool water if possible
- If immersion isn't possible, cool victim with water, or wrap in wet sheets and fan for quick evaporation
- Use cold compresses-especially to the head & neck area, also to armpits and groin
- Do NOT give any medication to lower fever--it will not be effective and may cause further harm
- Do NOT use an alcohol rub
- It is not advisable to give the victim anything by mouth (even water) until the condition has been stabilized

For more information on heat-related illnesses, prevention tips and first aid recommendations please go to:

- Burlington County Health Department website – www.co.burlington.nj.us/health
- New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Service – www.state.nj.us/health
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.cdc.gov