



The Dangers of Heat and Humidity.

When heat and humidity combine to reduce the amount of evaporation of sweat from the body, working or exercising outdoors becomes dangerous even for those in good shape. Heat illnesses include:

- ◆ Heat cramps or fainting – the least severe illness and usually the first sign that the body is having trouble with the heat. Cramping usually occurs in the legs and abdomen.
- ◆ Heat exhaustion – often affects the elderly, athletes, fire fighters, construction workers, factory workers, farmers and others who work in or wear heavy clothing in a hot, humid environment. Signals include cool, moist, pale or flushed skin, headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness and exhaustion.
- ◆ Heat stroke -- the least common illness and usually only occurs if people ignore the signals of heat exhaustion. Signs of heat stroke include: red, hot, dry skin; changes in consciousness; high temperatures over 102; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Heat stroke is a serious medical emergency.

Learn the signs of heat-related illnesses. If recognized early, they can usually be reversed. If you observe the symptoms of a heat illness, get the victim out of the heat. Loosen any tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths. Give cool water to drink but do not let the victim drink too quickly. A glass of water every 15 minutes is good. The victim should not resume normal activities the same day as the symptoms occurred.

Refusing water, vomiting and changes in consciousness mean that the situation is getting worse. Call an ambulance for assistance.

To protect against heat illnesses, follow these rules:

- ◆ If possible, work during the cooler times of the day, before 11:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m.
- ◆ Adjust gradually to working in the heat over a period of several days.
- ◆ Take drinks frequently, every 15 minutes. Plain water is the best.
- ◆ Take short rest periods in the shade or in a cool environment.
- ◆ Wear appropriate clothing and use sunscreen if outdoors.

Eat and drink appropriately

- ◆ Carry a source of water or juice with you. Take frequent drinks and avoid caffeine and alcohol. Pregnant women should be particularly careful since dehydration and heat stress has been associated with pre-term labor.
- ◆ Eat small, lighter meals and eat more often throughout the day.