

## HEALTH & SAFETY: HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

### Description of Issue and Importance

Heat-related illnesses can be very serious and even fatal if not treated promptly. Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities may be more prone to heat-related illnesses due to difficulty communicating how they feel and medications including psychotropics and diuretics.

**Heat Stroke** is a life threatening crisis caused when the body overheats. It usually occurs in hot, humid places and when a person is dehydrated. Signs include body temperature over 104 degrees, lack of sweating, hot dry skin, rapid or very slow pulse, confusion, seizures and unconsciousness. Contributing factors include over-dressing, prolonged sun exposure, poor circulation, and medications which limit the ability to sweat.

**Heat Exhaustion** is a warning sign that the body is getting too hot. It occurs when the body begins to overheat and body fluids are lost through sweating. Signs include sweating, clammy skin, rapid breathing, dry mouth, weakness, dizziness, muscle cramps, nausea, headache, and a weak or rapid pulse.

### Recommended Action and Prevention Strategy

- Air conditioning is the best way to prevent heat related illness; even a few hours a day will help.
- If you believe someone is experiencing Heat Stroke, call 911 immediately. Cool the person. Get them to a shady area. Loosen clothing. Apply cool or tepid water the skin and fan the person. Elevate the feet above the head if possible. DO NOT give beverages to a person who is too confused to drink.
- Treatment for heat exhaustion includes rest, cool drinks, loosened or lightweight clothing, cool shower, and air-conditioning. Massage muscle cramps. Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last more than an hour.

### Related Resources

MedicineNet [www.medicinenet.com](http://www.medicinenet.com)

WebMD [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

### Outreach Services

[outreach@fssa.in.gov](mailto:outreach@fssa.in.gov) • [DDRSOutreach.IN.gov](http://DDRSOutreach.IN.gov)

For related reminders and resources, please visit [DDRSOutreach.IN.gov](http://DDRSOutreach.IN.gov).



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