Heat Exhaustion, Sunstroke & Heat Stress

When working during hot weather, we may suffer heat exhaustion or sunstroke. Heat exhaustion is caused by the loss of body salt, and sunstroke occurs when the body mechanism is not able to keep the system cool. Following are the symptoms of these ailments and the steps we should take to aid the victim.

Symptoms: The first signs of heat exhaustion are dizziness, weakness, headache, blurred vision, nausea and staggering. The face becomes pale, there is profuse sweating, the pulse is weak, and breathing is shallow. The person may become unconscious.

Treatment: When someone shows symptoms of heat exhaustion, immediately remove that person to a place where the air is circulating freely. Make the person lie down and keep him or her warm. If the victim is conscious, add a teaspoon of salt to a pint of cool water and give this to the victim in small sips at frequent intervals. If the heat exhaustion symptoms persist, call the doctor.

How to Avoid:

Keep in good physical condition and stop to rest when you begin to feel faint. Increase dietary salt and fluids when working in extremely hot weather.

SUNSTROKE (HEATSTROKE) Symptoms:

The victim develops a severe headache, the face is red the skin is hot and dry, there is no sweating, and the pulse is strong and very rapid. The person has a high fever (105°—106°F.) and may become unconscious. This is followed by convulsions, coma, and sometimes death.

Treatment: Get the victim to where there's professional medical treatment as soon as possible. In the meantime place the individual in the shade. Loosen the clothing and cool the victim with the best means available. If the individual's temperature starts to drop, cover with a light blanket, so that the sudden change in body temperature won't cause shivering or convulsions.

How to Avoid: Stay away from alcoholic beverages. and drink water, lemonade, or citrus fruit juices. Wear clothing that is lightweight, well ventilated, and loose. Replace the body salts lost through perspiration by making sure your salt and fluid intake is adequate.

Know The Difference: Become familiar with the symptoms of sun- stroke and heat exhaustion. As we've discussed, the treatment for each of these ailments is different and knowing the difference could mean life or death.

Heat Stress Prevention

As spring turns into summer and brings up "hot weather," we should all be aware of some tips to prevent heat stress. Remember physical activity at high temperatures can directly affect health and indirectly be the cause of accidents.

What Is Heat Stress?

It's a signal that says the body is having difficulty maintaining its narrow temperature range. The heart pumps faster, blood is diverted from internal organs to the skin, breathing rate increases, sweating increases, all in an attempt to transfer more heat to the outside air and cool the skin by evaporation of sweat. If the body can't keep up then the person suffers effects ranging from heat cramps to heat exhaustion, and finally to heat stroke.
Dry Clothes and Skin doesn't mean you're not sweating!

In dry climates you might not feel wet or sticky, but you are still sweating. On a very warm day you can lose as much as two litres of fluid.

Beat the heat and help prevent the ill effects of heat stress by:

- Drinking water frequently and moderately (every 15-30 minutes—about a glassful). Due to the fact that most of us already consume excessive salt in our diets; salt tablets are NOT recommended for general use.

- Resting frequently.

- Eating lightly.

- Doing more strenuous jobs during the cooler morning hours.

- Utilizing the ventilation or fans in enclosed areas.

- Remembering that it takes about 1-2 weeks for the body to adjust to the heat; this adaptation to heat is quickly lost—so your body will need time to adjust after a vacation too.

- Avoiding alcohol consumption. Many cases of heat stroke have occurred the day after a "night on the town."

- Wearing light, coloured, cotton clothes and keeping your shirt on—desert nomads don't wear all those clothes for nothing.

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