

Heat-Related Illnesses in Teens

Heat related illnesses are caused due to prolonged exposure to heat and also humidity without any reprieve and due to inadequate intake of fluids. Kids and teens adjust to the variations in heat compared to adults who adapt more quickly. However the heat production is high in them when compared to adults but sweat relatively less. Sweating is the natural action of the body and cooling mechanism to counter heat. Kids and teens often ignore these facts and do not hydrate themselves enough while playing, participating in sports and exercises.

Kids and teens with health problems that are chronic or those who are on certain prescription could be more susceptible to heat related problems. Overweight adolescents or those who wear heavy clothing in times of exertion also suffer heat related illnesses. Heat related illnesses are basically classified into three types. They are: Heat cramps, heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

Heat cramps are the mildest of all heat related injuries and constitute aching muscle cramps and also spasms that occur during intense exercising and also after intense exercising and also sweating in high heat. The symptoms of heat cramps include cramps that are painful in the legs. Flushed and moist skin is also symptoms of heat cramps. The symptoms could also include mild fever generally below 102 degree Fahrenheit. Teens suffering from heat cramps should move to a cool place and take adequate rest. Remove any excessive clothing and wear or put cool clothing on skin or cool skin using air conditioner or fan. Sports drinks which are cool and which contains sugars and salts can also be taken. Stretching out cramped muscles slowly and steadily also helps reduce heat cramps.

On the other hand heat exhaustion is more serious and severe compared to heat cramps and occur due to heavy loss of salt and water from the body. Extreme heat conditions, inadequate fluid intake and excessive sweating results in this conditions. Also, heat exhaustion occurs as a result of inability of the body to maintain the body temperature below the normal which can deteriorate further and also result in a heat stroke which is even worse. The symptoms of heat exhaustion are: muscle cramps, moist skin, pale skin, nausea, fever above 102 degree Fahrenheit, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue, headache, weakness, anxiety and faint feeling. Teens suffering from heat exhaustion should stay in cool surrounding and take enough rest. Removing excessive clothing, putting on cool clothes and sitting in fan or air conditioning also helps the situation. Intake of cold sports drinks which contains salts and sugars are also advisable. If a teen doesn't show any signs of improvement even after taking all these measures a physician should be consulted immediately.

Heat stroke is the severest condition of all heat related illnesses. In this

condition the body gets overwhelmed with excessive heat and the efficiency of the system that regulates body heat goes down considerably which can result in a serious emergency requiring immediate medical care. The symptoms of heat stroke include dry and warm skin, very high fever generally above 104 degree Fahrenheit, increased heart rate, appetite loss, nausea, headache, vomiting, fatigue, agitation, confusion, stupor, seizures, coma and possible death. A teenager experiencing symptoms of heat stroke should stay in a cool place and have adequate rest. Heat stroke is a serious condition and emergency attention should be sought by calling 911. In the meanwhile the affected teenager should be made free of excessive clothing and should be worn with cool clothes and also put cool water on the skin to lower the temperature. Placing ice bags in armpits also helps. Make the teenager drink cool drinks if the teenager is alert.

Heat strokes are very much preventable if certain precautions are taken like drinking adequate water during hot days, avoiding alcoholic and caffeine drinks, wearing light clothes, exercising in cooler time of the day, wearing sunglasses and hat, using umbrella on a hot day, applying sun cream with a spf of at least 15 etc.

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