

# PREVENTING HEAT ILLNESS

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## What is Heat Illness?

- A collection of conditions including heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.
- As the heat and humidity rise so does the number of cases of heat illness.
- Heat cramps are muscle spasms in the stomach, arms or legs which may begin during or after heavy activity and may cause mild discomfort or severe pain.
- Heat exhaustion causes feelings of extreme weakness, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and fainting and the person's skin turns pale, cold and moist with sweat.
- Heat stroke is a **life-threatening emergency** which causes the person to lose consciousness, their skin to become red, hot and dry. The body does not produce sweat!

## Who is at Risk for Heat Illness?

- Anybody is at risk for heat illness if exposed to the effect of heat and humidity for prolonged periods of time without taking proper precautions.
- People who are at greater risk and should take greater precaution include:
  - Children
  - Obese persons
  - Elderly persons
  - Persons who work outdoors
  - Persons with chronic illnesses, such as heart or breathing problems
  - Persons taking certain medications (check with your nurse)
  - Persons with vomiting or diarrhea

## How can I Prevent Heat Illness?

- Drink plenty of cool water on hot summer days but check with your doctor for any fluid restrictions.
- Reduce your physical activity and plan to do needed activities at cooler times during the day while taking many breaks and periods of rest between activities.
- Always wear a hat when exposed to direct sun light.
- Wear light-colored and porous clothing preferably cotton.
- Report any signs or symptoms of heat illness to your doctor immediately.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid taking salt tablets unless ordered by your doctor.
- If you do not have air conditioning, keep your house well ventilated by keeping windows open and using fans to keep the air circulating.