

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is a result of your body overheating. It's one of three heat-related syndromes, with heat cramps being the mildest and heatstroke being the most severe. Causes of heat exhaustion include exposure to high temperatures, particularly when combined with high humidity, and strenuous physical activity. Without prompt treatment, heat exhaustion can lead to heatstroke, a life-threatening condition. Fortunately, heat exhaustion is preventable.

Symptoms may develop suddenly or over time, especially during prolonged periods of exercise. They include:

- Cool, moist skin with goose bumps when in the heat
- Heavy sweating
- Faintness
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Weak, rapid pulse
- Low blood pressure upon standing
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea
- Headache

Heat exhaustion is more common than you might think. Risk factors of heat exhaustion include:

- Age: People over 65 and children under four can't regulate their body temperature as easily. They are also more likely to get dehydrated.
- Alcohol use: Dehydration and difficulty controlling body temperature can result from drinking alcohol. They both increase the risk of heat exhaustion.
- Lifestyle: People who aren't used to working in hot conditions have a higher chance of heat exhaustion. The risk increases if you wear heavy clothing or equipment.
- Medications: Side effects of some medications may increase your risk. For example, diuretics (water pills) to treat heart conditions reduce the amount of fluid in your body and can cause dehydration. Also, chemotherapy drugs (to treat cancer) and beta blockers (to lower blood pressure and slow the heart rate) can also increase the risk of heat exhaustion.
- Weight and general health: People who carry extra weight have a higher chance of heat exhaustion. Obesity and certain health conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease) increase the risk.

When to see a doctor:

If you think you're experiencing heat exhaustion: Stop all activity and rest, move to a cool place, and replace fluids as soon as possible. Contact your doctor if your signs or symptoms worsen or if they don't improve within one hour. If you are with someone showing signs of heat exhaustion, seek immediate medical attention if he or she becomes confused or agitated, loses consciousness, or is unable to drink. Untreated, heatstroke can result from heat exhaustion. Heatstroke is a serious, life-threatening condition. It can cause brain damage, organ failure and death.

View link for additional information: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heat-exhaustion/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20373253>

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