

# Heat Illness and Dehydration

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In the heat of the summer, it's important to remember to keep yourself healthy and hydrated. When the weather is hot, dehydration and heat illness are major risks, especially for those who spend much of the day outdoors or in confined areas, such as barns, with no air conditioning.

Dehydration and heat illness occur in several stages of severity. The stages in increasing severity are listed below along with their signs and symptoms:

- **DEHYDRATION:** fatigue, thirst, dry lips and tongue, lack of energy, and feeling overheated.
  - By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. To avoid dehydration, follow the prevention guidelines below.

If dehydration is not treated soon enough, these more severe conditions may occur:

- **HEAT CRAMPS:** painful cramps of the abdominal muscles, arms or legs.
- **HEAT EXHAUSTION:** dizziness, nausea, vomiting, headaches, weakness, muscle pain and sometimes unconsciousness.
- **HEAT STROKE:** body temperature of 104° or higher and severe symptoms of nausea, vomiting, seizures, disorientation or delirium, lack of sweating, shortness of breath, unconsciousness and coma.

## Prevention

When working, playing, or exercising outdoors in the heat of summer, it is crucial to stay hydrated throughout all activities. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink water, by then you are already dehydrated. It is important to drink 8-12 glasses of water daily and drink extra water every 15-20 minutes when working or exercising outdoors. To see how well you are keeping yourself hydrated, a good rule of thumb is that urine should be lighter in color; if urine is darker, then more water needs to be consumed.

## What to Do

If you or someone around you experiences heat illness (dehydration or heat cramps):

- Move out of the sun to a cool, comfortable place
- Begin drinking plenty of cool fluids
- Remove any excess layers of clothing or bulky equipment
- Cool, wet cloths may be placed on overheated skin
- *Gentle* stretching of affected muscles can help relieve pain

If you or someone around you experiences heat exhaustion:

- Follow the same steps as above, but the individual should remain out of heat and sun for the remainder of the day

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- The individual should be carefully monitored
- If symptoms do not improve or fluids cannot be taken in, a doctor should be seen

If you or someone around you experiences heat stroke:

- This condition is always an emergency; *seek medical attention immediately!*

This message is brought to you by the Center for Rural Health and Farm Safety at Carle Foundation Hospital. For more information, please visit us at [carle.org/farmsafety](http://carle.org/farmsafety), email [farmsafety@carle.com](mailto:farmsafety@carle.com) or call (217) 902-5204.