

GUIDE TO HEAT INJURY

(How to stay in the action)

1. AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION.

1.1. HYDRATION is critical. If you're working in extreme heat, the most important thing you can do is drink water. Drink at least one quart per hour. It doesn't matter that you're not thirsty. **DRINK THE WATER!** High humidity and heavy clothing reduce the effectiveness of your perspiration, so you'll perspire more and you'll need more water. Don't take salt tablets, but you can drink specialized drinks like Gatorade for some of the water. Caffeine is a diuretic, so abstain.

1.2. The Buddy System is essential. Serious heat induced medical problems include early, subtle symptoms of disorientation, confusion, and reduced ability to reason. That makes it difficult to detect and respond to one's own symptoms, but fairly easy to observe symptoms in others. Don't be afraid to question someone's physical condition or to seek medical assistance when needed. The following material identifies symptoms, causes, and first aid actions for several heat-induced medical problems.

2. HEAT STRESS.

2.1. Symptoms. Irritability, short tempered, uncomfortable with the heat. Blood Pressure and body temperature are normal.

2.2. Cause. Exposure to increased heat/humidity levels causing the body to work harder to maintain homeostasis, reducing blood flow to the brain.

2.3. First Aid. Rest and cool the body, if possible. Remain aware of your symptoms to help control them. Seek medical assistance as soon as possible if symptoms do not lessen in a few minutes.

3. HEAT CRAMPS.

3.1. Symptoms. Painful muscle contractions following a period of heavy perspiration. Blood pressure and body temperature are normal.

3.2. Cause. Loss of body salts (electrolytes).

3.3. First Aid. Rest and cool the body, if possible, and drink specialized drinks like Gatorade. Seek medical assistance as soon as possible.

919 SOWVA91-204

Supersedes 919 SOGVA 127-1, Nov 90

DISTRIBUTION: F

OPR: 919 SOW/SE

1 APRIL 1996

4. HEAT EXHAUSTION (a serious medical condition).

4.1. Symptoms. Profuse perspiration, followed by pale, damp, dry skin, in the presence of normal to slightly elevated body temperature. This may, in rare cases, be accompanied by hyperventilation to unconsciousness. Individual may progress through fatigue, dizziness, palpitation, nausea, headache, and disorientation.

4.2. Cause. Circulatory system is increasing skin circulation to cool the blood and support perspiration. The body can not simultaneously support adequate blood flow to the brain, muscles, and organs. Reduced fluid and electrolyte levels worsen the conditions.

4.3. First Aid. Rest and cool the body, if possible, and drink specialized drinks like Gatorade. Bed rest for several hours may be required. Seek medical assistance as soon as possible. IV fluids may be obtained at a medical aid station.

5. HEAT STROKE (a medical emergency).

5.1. Symptoms. Dry skin, rapid pulse, mental confusion, headache, body temperature well above normal, staggering gait or unconsciousness.

5.2. Cause. The body's head regulating system has shut down.

5.3. First Aid. Rest and cool the body with ice or cold water to lower body temperature. Massage limbs during cooling to stimulate circulation. Use of cooling sprays and fans may help. Restore fluids and electrolytes. Seek medical assistance as soon as possible for hospital treatment.

6. A LAST NOTE. Beverages that contain alcohol, caffeine, or other diuretics should be avoided when heat-induced injury is possible. Caffeine-free soft drinks are OK, as are Gatorade, Koolade, and similar products.