

HEAT STRESS

How does one recognize heat stress? What should you do when a person suffers from heat stress?

Signs and Symptoms of Heat Stress	Response
Excessive thirst and sweating: These are the first signs of heat stress.	Follow your natural desire to drink plenty of water frequently. Remain hydrated.
High body temperature: A body temperature of 104°F (40°C) or higher is one of the main symptoms of heatstroke.	Try to lower the person's body temperature as soon as possible. For this, help the person lie down near a fan or an air-cooler; place a wet towel or a wet cloth dipped in cold water over the person, or place ice-packs over the body, or sponge the person with the coolest available water.
	Do not cover the affected person with any blanket
Muscle cramps due to loss of salt from body: This mainly occurs in those who are working hard outdoors.	Consume salted butter milk, rice-water, lime juice, dal-pani, aam panna, etc. ORS (Oral rehydration salts solution) is also useful.
	Do not consume glucose
Dizziness and fainting.	The affected person should be shifted to a cool place. Help the person lie down by placing his/her head lower than the rest of the body. This position increases blood flow to the brain.
	Do not place a pillow below the head and also do not place the person's head on someone's lap.
Heat stroke: When the heat-stress progresses, the pulse and breathing can become faster and weaker. The affected person may pass very little urine. It may be dark in colour. In some cases headache, nausea and vomiting might also occur. Slowly, the person becomes lethargic and drowsy, and starts talking incoherently. He/she may refuse to drink water even if given. Skin may become dry and pale. There might be no sweating and the person can run a very high fever.	This is a serious condition and requires immediate attention: Make arrangements to shift the person to a hospital. Meanwhile, continue to place ice packs over the body to rapidly cool the person. Place a towel or a wet cloth dipped in cold water over the person, or place ice-packs over the body, or sponge the person with the coolest available water.

How to protect yourself from the heat.

I. Do not exert yourself in the sun as far as possible. If you have to work outdoors, follow the precautions listed below:

a) Consume plenty of water and other fluids:

1. Drink a glass of water or more every hour. Other fluids such as lime water, buttermilk, coconut water, and aam panna can also help. However, avoid consumption of too much sugar.
2. Avoid coffee, tea and alcohol, glucose and other sweet drinks as these increase the rate of dehydration.

b) Wear suitable clothing:

1. Wear loose and light coloured clothes made from light fabrics like cotton, etc.
2. Cover your head and face with a cloth or cap, even while travelling on a motorbike.

c) Wisely decide your outdoor working hours:

1. Try to begin work in the early morning and continue till around 11 a.m.
2. Take a break from work during the hottest part of the day (from about 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). You can continue later in the evening after 5 p.m.
3. Try to stay in the shade as much as possible.
4. If you have to work under the direct sun, take rest from time to time in shaded areas.
5. Create temporary shelters in work areas where trees are not available like at Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) sites, construction sites for roads and buildings, etc.
6. If you have to travel outdoors during the daytime, use an umbrella to protect yourself from direct sun.

d) Follow proper travelling habits:

1. Avoid travelling by motorbike for long distances, particularly between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. When you are on the motorbike, ensure that you use a helmet.
2. Drink water frequently while travelling.
3. Avoid travelling with children, particularly infants, for long distances. They tend to remain silent while suffering from heat stress and heat stroke.
4. Opt for bus/train journeys.

II. Know who is susceptible to heat stress:

1. Elderly people and children (particularly infants) are largely susceptible. Take extra care to ensure their comfort and wellbeing.
2. Workers and labourers who work in open spaces are directly affected by the sun.
3. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, particularly if they are working outdoors or even in a kitchen, need special care.

III. Take appropriate action at home:

1. If you feel extremely hot in your home, then try to rest under a tree during the afternoon.
2. Keep the windows of your home open when it becomes too hot indoors. Using fans can also help.
3. Always drink water frequently even when indoors.

If someone develops symptoms such as vomiting, fainting, or high fever take the person to a health centre immediately.



Disclaimer:

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