

Heat Reactions

There are three main reactions to an extremely hot environment. All three are caused by excessive loss of water through sweating.

Heatstroke or Sunstroke

Symptoms

- hot, flushed skin
- high fever (at least 105°F, or 40.6°C)
- not sweating
- delirium or unconsciousness
- shock (low blood pressure).

First aid

- Call your child's health care provider IMMEDIATELY.
- The high fever can be a life-threatening emergency. Cool your child off as rapidly as possible. Move him to a cool place. Sponge him with cool water (as cold as is tolerable), and fan him. If your child is unconscious, immersion in cold water could be life-saving. Note: Ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) will not help.
- If your child is conscious, give him a glass of cold water to drink every 15 minutes until he feels better.
- Call for emergency transportation.

Heat Exhaustion

Symptoms

- cold, pale skin
- no fever (temperature less than 100°F, or 37.8°C)
- sweating
- dizziness
- fainting
- weakness.

First aid

- Call your child's health care provider IMMEDIATELY.
- Put your child in a cool place. Have him lie down with his feet elevated.
- Give your child a glass of cold water to drink every 15 minutes until he feels better.
- Your health care provider will probably want to examine your child's state of hydration. After 2 or 3 glasses of water, you can drive in. Continue to offer your child water during the ride.

Heat Cramps

Symptoms

- severe cramps in the limbs and abdomen
- no fever.

Home care

Heat cramps are the most common reaction to excessive heat. They are never serious. Give your child a glass of cold water to drink every 15 minutes until he feels better. Children with heat cramps do not need to be seen by a health care provider.

Prevention

When your child is working or exercising in a hot environment, have him drink extra fluids. Avoid salt tablets because they slow down the absorption of water. Light-colored, lightweight clothing will help keep your child cooler.

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