

[IMAGE]

## **Beware of Heat Stroke**

By Julie T. Chen, MD

While there are many benefits of summer time such as more produce options and better weather to encourage us to be more active before and after work hours, there are still some risks that come along with the longer days filled with sunshine and warmth.

Heat stroke is a term that many of us have heard of, but many of us may not be too clear as to what it really means. Some of my patients incorrectly use the terminology for simply feeling a bit warm without any other symptoms. So, let's take a moment today to clarify what it is, and more importantly, what to watch out for and what to do if it occurs.

There are other states of being over-heated such as heat cramps or heat exhaustion, which are milder versions of hyperthermia spectrum (conditions of elevated body temperature spectrum). Neither of these conditions, however, should be considered 'mild' and still should be addressed before it progresses into a more lethal state of heat stroke.

Heat stroke is when a body's core temperature reaches above about 104 degrees Fahrenheit and the symptoms you'll notice in someone would include, but are not limited to: nausea, vomiting, headaches, muscle cramps and pain, dizziness, fatigue, hallucinations, disorientation, loss of consciousness, weakness, seizures, coma, agitation, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, rapid pulse, elevated body temperature, and absence of sweating despite hot flushed skin.

Heat Strokes - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark It is important to remember that heat stroke is a medical emergency and if left without prompt treatment, it can lead to death. So, the main thing to keep in mind is to get help as soon as possible and help to cool down the patient.

Those who are more at risk are those who are dehydrated and in the elderly, infants, those who work outdoors in the sun, or athletes. If you fall into one of these categories or even if you don't, just remember to stay hydrated and avoid physical activities or exertion when the weather is hot and/or humid.

I usually will recommend my patients to check the weather forecast in the morning and try to plan your activities accordingly. If it will be a scorcher that day, it's wise to avoid outdoor activities especially if you know you won't have access to hydration or locations where you can cool off. Days like this should indicate that you are better off staying indoors that day rather than taking the risk of a potentially fatal complication with your outdoor activity.

Having said all this, let's be clear that I'm not trying to be the Grinch who stole sunny joyful summer days, but rather, I am encouraging everyone to enjoy the summer months responsibly. Please do not take this as an indication to not be active at all. Instead, see it as yet another opportunity to learn how to enjoy your environment in a way that helps to promote your health, rather than hurt it. Happy hiking this summer, let's just remember to check the weather and make sure to bring plenty of water.

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