



# Can you get heat exhaustion while swimming?

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**Yes, heat exhaustion can occur after long periods of exercise. So, if you are exercising a lot in the pool you can have it!**

## **Do you know the symptoms of a heat disorder**

Heat disorders are a group of physically related illnesses caused by prolonged exposure to hot temperatures, restricted fluid intake, or failure of temperature regulating mechanisms of the body. Disorders of heat exposure include heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke (also called sunstroke).

## **Heat Exhaustion**

Heat exhaustion can result from prolonged exposure to hot temperatures, restricted fluid intake, or failure of temperature regulation mechanisms of the body. Heat exhaustion requires immediate attention, as it can rapidly progress to heat stroke.

The skin may appear cool, moist, and pale. The person may complain of headache and nausea, with a feeling of overall weakness and exhaustion. Dizziness, faintness, and mental confusion are often present, as is a rapid, weak pulse. Breathing becomes fast and shallow. Fluid loss reduces blood volume and lowers blood pressure. Intense thirst and a highly concentrated, reduced volume of deep yellow or orange urine are signs of inadequate fluid intake.

**First Aid:** Get victim out of sun. Lay them down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air conditioned room. Provide sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue use. If vomiting continues, seek immediate medical attention.

## **Heat Stroke**

Heat stroke is life threatening, and because a high percentage of individuals who experience heat stroke die, immediate medical attention is critical when symptoms first appear. Heat stroke, like heat exhaustion, is also a result of prolonged exposure to hot temperatures, restricted fluid intake, or failure of temperature regulation mechanisms of the body. However, the severity of impact on the body is much greater with heat stroke.

Other symptoms of heat stroke include mental confusion with possible combativeness and bizarre behavior, staggering, and faintness. The pulse becomes strong and rapid (160–180 beats per minute). The skin takes on a dry and flushed appearance. There is often very little perspiration. The individual can quickly lose consciousness or have convulsions.

Simply moving the individual experiencing heat stroke to a cooler place is not enough to reverse internal overheating. Emergency medical assistance should be called immediately. While waiting for help to arrive, quick action to lower body temperature must take place.

***First Aid:* HEAT STROKE IS A SEVERE MEDICAL EMERGENCY. SUMMON EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE OR GET THE VICTIM TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY. DELAY CAN BE FATAL.**

## Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are the least severe of the heat-related illnesses. This heat disorder is often the first signal that the body is having difficulty with increased temperature. Individuals exposed to excessive heat should view heat cramps as a warning sign of a potential heat-related emergency.

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms caused by the excessive loss of electrolytes due to heavy perspiration. The correct balance of electrolytes is crucial to many body functions, including muscle contraction and nerve impulse transmission. Heavy exertion in extreme heat and/or restricted fluid intake may lead to heat cramps. With heat cramps, muscle tissue becomes less flexible, causing pain, difficult movement, and involuntary tightness. Cramps can occur more often in the legs and abdomen than in other areas of the body.

***First Aid:*** Firm pressure on cramping muscles, or gentle massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue use

## When to Call the Doctor

Emergency medical services should be called immediately if the individual has any symptoms of heat stroke. A person is having heat stroke when his body reaches 104 F or higher. It can happen when in high temperatures or high humidity, from too much strenuous activity or exercise, or if the body is unable to cool itself properly (possibly due to dehydration).

**Certain medications can also make you more susceptible to heat stroke, so talk to your doctor to find out if anything you are taking could put you at risk.**

## Keeping Hydrated in Summer Heat

We've all experienced it at some point when working out or on the field – fatigue sets in, your mouth feels dry and your legs are heavy. These are all common signs of dehydration.

When an athlete works out, body fluid is lost through sweat. If the fluid lost through sweat is not replaced, dehydration and early fatigue are unavoidable. Losing even 2% of body fluids (less than 3.5 pounds in a 180-pound athlete) can impair performance by increasing fatigue and affecting cognitive skills. Since many athletes lose between 5-8 pounds of sweat during a game, it's easy for them to become dehydrated if they don't drink enough to replace what is lost in sweat.

### Dehydration can be prevented

**When to drink:** Drink before you get thirsty. By the time you're thirsty you are already dehydrated, so it's important to drink at regular intervals – especially when it is hot outside.

**What to drink:** Research shows that a lightly flavoured beverage with a small amount of sodium encourages people to drink enough to stay hydrated. The combination of flavour and electrolytes in a sports drink like Gatorade provides one of the best choices to help you stay properly hydrated.

**What not to drink:** During activity, avoid drinks with high sugar content, alcohol or carbonation because:

- Alcohol can dehydrate the body
- Fruit juices, soft drinks and energy drinks are high in sugar which slows fluid absorption by the body



**This information is provided to you by the IES safety committee, it serves as tips only and is not a replacement for visiting your doctor**