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sunstroke

heatstroke

heat prostration

CAT. BY I. C. D.

Sunstroke, heatstroke, and heat prostration are serious illnesses. They can be fatal. Fortunately, they can almost always be prevented by sensible hot-weather care.

WHAT CAUSES THEM

These conditions occur when the body's heat-regulating system collapses during prolonged heat or overexposure to the sun. Humidity in hot weather adds to the strain by interfering with the evaporation of sweat, which is one of our most important cooling devices. Loss of large amounts of water and salt through perspiration helps to bring on the collapse. Anything which heats the body, such as exercise, puts an extra load on the system.

SUNSTROKE AND HEATSTROKE

Sunstroke is caused by too long exposure to the hot sun, while heatstroke is due to prolonged oppressive heat, often indoors. The causes of both appear to be the same. Both have the same symptoms, and need the same first-aid treatment. The most common form starts with a splitting headache. Everything looks red to the victim, and he loses consciousness. His temperature rises dangerously—it can go to 110 degrees or higher. If unconsciousness and high temperature last any length of time, the danger is very great. In extreme cases, the victim collapses suddenly and dies within a few minutes.

HEAT PROSTRATION

Heat prostration, or heat exhaustion, is caused by prolonged heat and humidity, but is very different from heatstroke or sunstroke. The victim is usually conscious, but weak and dizzy. His temperature falls instead of rising, and he feels cold and clammy.

FIRST AID

When a person collapses in hot weather:

- Call a doctor at once.
- Move the victim into the shade and loosen any tight clothing.
- Feel his skin. If it feels *cold* and *moist*, give first aid

for heat prostration. (See below.) If it feels *hot*, he probably has sunstroke or heatstroke—but *do not give first aid until you are sure*. The collapse may have been caused by something very different, such as apoplexy or heart failure. If you have a thermometer, take his temperature. If it is 105 degrees or higher, give first aid for sunstroke or heatstroke. If it is around 102, take it again every five minutes, and begin first aid at once if the temperature is steadily rising. If you have no thermometer, do *not* give first aid. Wait for the doctor.

For sunstroke and heatstroke, put a pillow under the victim's head, and cool him as quickly as possible. Wet his clothes with cold water, cover him with cold wet sheets or bath towels, or put ice packs around his head, neck, and body. Fan him, and rub his arms and legs to keep the blood circulating. If possible, get a cold tub bath ready while the doctor is on his way.

For heat prostration, keep his head *low*, and *warm* his body. Even though the weather is hot, cover the victim with blankets and put hot water bottles around him. Rub his arms and legs. If he is conscious, give him hot tea or coffee.

PREVENTION

Simple, common-sense precautions will nearly always prevent these conditions. During hot weather:

- Don't expose yourself to the heat when you don't have to.
- Don't go out in the hot sunshine without a hat.

- Don't wear heavy or tight clothing.
- Don't exercise strenuously in the sun.
- Don't exercise just before or after meals.
- Don't overeat.
- Don't overindulge in alcoholic drinks.

On sultry days, keep the air circulating to help the evaporation of sweat. Keep shaded windows open and use an electric fan.

If you perspire freely, you may need extra water and salt. Drink water often throughout the day, one glass at a time. The amount of salt you need depends upon how much you sweat out. Office workers probably get enough in their food, while stokers may need a salt tablet every half hour, or a quarter of a teaspoonful dissolved in a glass of water every hour. Children who perspire freely at play should be given salted crackers or salted nuts. Use your best judgment. If you feel the heat too much, you may not be getting enough. A severe lack of salt may cause cramps.

Some people must be especially careful in hot weather. The aging, the very young, alcoholics, and people with heart trouble are easily affected by sun and heat. A person who has had sunstroke or heat prostration will collapse more easily a second time.

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