

Over Heated: How to Avoid Heat Exhaustion

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It's summer time in Arizona and that can make you extremely vulnerable to the potentials of heat exhaustion. People usually only hear about someone suffering from heat exhaustion on the evening news, and while it is easy avoidable, that doesn't mean that you aren't at risk. Brushing up on a few ways to stay cool this summer could save your life.

When the body begins to produce more heat than it can release, you're headed for heat exhaustion. Often times you hear stories of someone who suffered from heat exhaustion, and the outcome is usually not good especially since children and the elderly are more apt to heat exhaustion, according to Suneil Jain, doctor of Naturopathic Medicine of Phoenix. There a number of symptoms that can indicate heat exhaustion and if left untreated for more than an hour, it could turn into heat stroke. These symptoms include weakness, tiredness, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, muscle cramps, paleness, heavy perspiration, cool clammy skin, rapid or weak pulse and dry mouth.

Jain notes that one common misconception regarding heat exhaustion is that it can only happen after immediate exposure to heat. "Heat exhaustion can actually occur a few days after exposure to high temperatures if an imbalance of electrolytes was never corrected," Jain says. "Always rehydrate after being out in the heat for any period of time." Here are five tips from Jain to protect yourself against heat exhaustion:

1. Drink plenty of good quality water or electrolyte replacers like coconut water. Drink these types of fluids more than usual.
2. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
3. Avoid direct sunlight if possible. If unavoidable, use an umbrella or wide brim hat to protect yourself from the sun.
4. Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.
5. Exercise or work outdoors during cooler parts of the day. If unavoidable due to work, take frequent breaks in the shade.

By drinking plenty of water and eating fruits and veggies for the natural occurring water and electrolyte content, you can steer clear of a meltdown and avoid heat exhaustion altogether. If you find yourself or someone else experiencing symptoms of heat exhaustion, seek immediate medical attention. Try and cool them down by having them take a cool shower or drink cold water. "Elevating the feet above heart rate will increase circulation to the body's core," Jain says. These basic guidelines will keep you out of harm's way as you breeze through an Arizona summer.