



# First aid fact sheet

## Heat-induced illness

(previously called heat exhaustion and heat stroke)



- A heat-induced illness can quickly become life-threatening.
- If the patient does not improve quickly (within 10 minutes), send for an ambulance. Call **Triple Zero (000)**.
- First aid for a heat-induced illness is cooling and rehydration.

### Signs

- The patient can be hot, sweaty and breathless.
- Or they can be hot and dry by the time they are seen.
- If the patient is not sweating, this is a sign of serious illness.

Other gradual signs can include:

- not able to continue the activity—feeling hot, exhausted and weak
- high body temperature
- dizziness and faintness
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea
- pale skin and other signs of shock
- rapid weak pulse
- poor muscle control or weakness, or unsteady gait
- decreasing levels of consciousness, confusion, or seizures.

Carbohydrate electrolyte fluids (any commercially available 'sports drink') can be an alternative to water for the management of exertion-related dehydration. As a guiding principle, oral rehydration should be guided by the patient's thirst, although the patient can not feel thirst when dehydrated.

### What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Lie the patient down in a cool or shaded area.
- 3 **STRIP** the patient of as much clothing as possible.

**If the patient does not improve quickly (within 10 minutes), call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.**

- 4 **SOAK** the patient with any available water.
- 5 **FAN** the patient continuously.
- 6 Give cold water to the patient to drink if they are fully conscious and able to swallow.

**If practicable and possible, immersing the patient in a bath of cold water is the most effective cooling method.**

**For the patient more than 5 years old**

- 1 Immerse the patient (whole body from the neck down) in a bath of cold water (preferably 1–7 °) for 15 minutes.
- 2 Continuously observe the patient to ensure an open airway in case of any change in their level of consciousness.

**If a cold bath is not available, use a combination of the following:**

- 1 Wet the patient with cool or cold water under a shower or with a hose or other source of running water.
- 2 Apply cold packs to the neck, groin, armpits, facial cheeks, palms of hands, soles of feet.
- 3 Repeatedly wet the skin with a wet cloth or spray bottle.
- 4 Fan continuously.

**For the patient less than 5 years old**

- 1 Place the patient in a bath of lukewarm water (if available) and sponge frequently.

**If a bath is not available, use a combination of the following:**

- 1 Wet the patient with cool or cold water under a shower or with a hose or other source of running water.
- 2 Repeatedly wet the skin with a wet cloth or spray bottle.
- 3 Fan continuously.

**In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)**

**DRSABCD** Danger ▶ Response ▶ Send for help ▶ Airway ▶ Breathing ▶ CPR ▶ Defibrillation

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