

Heat wave: Being active in the heat

Your body produces more heat when you exercise, and that heat, combined with the outside heat, can create dangerously high body temperatures. You risk becoming dehydrated and feeling ill with heat cramps, heat exhaustion or even heat stroke. Strenuous activities in hot climatic conditions can cause even healthy young people to develop a condition called exertional hyperpyrexia. This can result in collapse and even death within one to two days; early signs are lack of co-ordination and slurring of speech due to the effect of heat on a very sensitive part of the brain called the cerebellum.

Use common sense - slow down during the heat, stay indoors as much as possible and avoid over exertion and strenuous activity.

- Aim to exercise very early in the morning, or at night when the temperature is cooler.
- In hot conditions, reduce the time you spend warming-up and exercise at a lower pace.
- Don't exercise if you feel unwell or are recovering from recent illness.
- If you start to feel ill whilst exercising, slow down or stop.
- If you exercise outdoors during the heat, try to find some shade.
- Drink plenty of water before and during exercise. At least 2 -3 litres of water should be drunk a day during hot weather.
- Sports drinks are specifically designed to help hydration, as they help replace the sodium, chloride and potassium you lose through sweating.
- Clothing should allow easy evaporation of sweat from the skin. It should be light coloured, light weight and loose fitting, and provide protection from the sun. Cotton rather than nylon/synthetic fabric is a better choice, as it absorbs sweat and is not usually irritating to the skin.
- If possible, wear a wide-brim hat and sunglasses. Caps do not provide adequate sun protection.
- Sunscreen should be applied at least 20 minutes before exposure to the sun, so it can be absorbed into the skin and provide effective protection.
- Reapply sunscreen as instructed on the bottle. In general, this is every 2 -3 hours or more often if sweating heavily, or if swimming.



- Children must be protected from over-exertion in hot weather, especially with intense or endurance exercise, like football.
- Females may suffer more during exercise in the heat because of their greater percentage of body fat, compared to men.
- Have a back-up plan so you don't have to exercise outdoors during hot weather. Work out at an air-conditioned gym, walk laps inside a shopping centre or climb stairs in an air-conditioned building.

Further information on how to cope and stay healthy in times of extreme heat can be found on our website www.public.health.wa.gov.au

