

Heat Induced Illness (Hyperthermia)

The management of heat induced illness is aimed at removing the cause and assisting the normal cooling mechanisms of the body.

Hyperthermia

Heat induced illness may be caused by:

- excessive heat absorption from a hot environment
- excessive heat production from metabolic activity
- failure of the body's cooling mechanisms
- an alteration in the body's set temperature.

Heatstroke is a condition caused by your body overheating, usually as a result of prolonged exposure to or physical exertion in high temperatures. This most serious form of heat injury, heatstroke, can occur if your body temperature rises. Heatstroke is a condition caused by your body overheating, usually as a result of prolonged exposure to or physical exertion in high temperatures. This most serious form of heat injury, heatstroke, can occur if your body temperature rises to 40C or higher.

Symptoms & Treatment

Symptoms

Heat induced illness presents with a spectrum of severity. Signs of exertion (hot, sweaty and breathless) but also have some of these indicators/red flags:

- Inability to continue the activity
- High body temperature
- Dizziness and faintness
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea
- Pale skin and other signs of shock
- Dry skin
- Poor muscle control or weakness
- Decreasing levels of consciousness, confusion or seizures.

The lack of sweating is a sign of serious illness, but only seen in a proportion of the more serious cases.

Treatment

Main aim is cooling and hydrating (but should not delay sending for an ambulance)

If unable to immerse the casualty from the neck down:

- Wet the person with cold/cool water (with a hose, shower, etc)
- Apply ice packs (unless 5 or younger)
- Repeatedly moisten skin with a moist cloth or atomizer spray
- Fan continuously

