

LIFE

Beat the heat — don't let it beat you



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours
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If you start to feel signs of heat stroke, find a way to cool down quickly. (REUTERS)

Summer is a great time to get out, let loose, and enjoy all the fun gatherings. Sometimes, however, things don't go quite as planned and that fun can turn to disaster when someone is injured or takes ill. Here are some simple things you can do to treat or prevent a few emergencies.

One of the most common summer emergencies is heat stroke or heat exhaustion. Signs of either heat stroke or exhaustion include dizziness, fatigue, nausea, and headaches. Heat stroke is a more severe medical emergency and medical care is needed immediately if the person goes unconscious, becomes confused, has either a rapid or slowed heartbeat, convulses, is perspiring heavily and feels cold and clammy, or is not sweating much, but the skin is hot and red even though their body temperature is elevated.

The first step is to get out of the heat. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool wet cloths to the skin. If they are able to drink water, make sure they drink slowly. If they don't recover within 30 minutes, contact a doctor. Those who've suffered heat exhaustion are usually more sensitive to heat for about a week afterward, so it is best to avoid the heat during that time. Remember that those aged four and under, and 65 and over, are more sensitive to heat, and that some illnesses and medications also lead to higher risks.

Insect stings are common with outdoor activities, and though uncomfortable, are not generally dangerous unless you have an allergy. If you are stung and have trouble breathing, feel dizzy or faint, your tongue swells, or you break out in hives, seek medical attention.

To remove the stinger, use a flat surface like a credit card to scrape it out or use tweezers to pull it out. Be careful to grab the base of the stinger so not as to squeeze the venom sac. Wash the wound area and apply ice. Remove any tight-fitting jewelry around the area so that rings and bracelets do not become difficult to remove as swelling grows.

Emergencies happen, but taking precautions in advance — like bringing enough water and bringing an EpiPen if you have serious allergies — can help you avoid bad situations. Treating underlying health conditions and working to optimize your health also gives you better protection from many health emergencies.

Dr. Melissa Carr practices traditional Chinese medicine in Vancouver.

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