



# County of Erie

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**Health Advisory #293**  
**Heat Advisory**

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*Please distribute to First Responders*

This is a reminder to the First Responder Community that high heat and humidity brings with it unique concerns for your responders and your patients.

## **FIRE SERVICE**

1. Monitor your firefighters, especially with evolutions using full PPE, SCBA and especially during live fire situations.
2. Remind your firefighters that proper hydration begins at least two hours before the activity begins and continues during the activity.
3. Hydration should be with water or diluted sports drinks.
4. Have appropriate work/rest cycles as the heat index increase. The higher the heat index, the shorter the work cycle and the longer the rest cycle.
5. Monitor your firefighters. The most common training injuries during the warmer months are heat related.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

1. Be conscious that some medications, hydration, obesity, age and alcohol consumption can adversely affect patients in the heat.
2. Patients should immediately be removed from the hot environment and moved to a cooler or shaded area.
3. Signs of Heat Stroke are a true medical emergency and require transportation.

## HEAT CRAMPS

Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy exercise in hot environments. Inadequate fluid intake often contributes to heat cramps. The spasms may be more intense and more prolonged than typical nighttime leg cramps. Muscles most often affected include those in your calves, arms, abdomen, and back, although heat cramps may involve any muscle group involved in the exercise.

### **If you suspect heat cramps:**

- Rest briefly and cool down.
- Drink clear juice or an electrolyte-containing sports drink.
- Practice gentle, range-of-motion stretching and gentle massage of the affected muscle group.
- If your cramps don't go away in 1 hour, call your doctor.

## HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion can range in severity from mild heat cramps to heat exhaustion to potentially life-threatening heatstroke.

Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion often begin suddenly, sometimes after excessive exercise, heavy perspiration, and inadequate fluid intake.

### **Signs and symptoms may include:**

- Feeling faint
- Nausea
- Heavy sweating
- Ashen appearance
- Rapid, weak heartbeat
- Low blood pressure
- Cool, moist skin
- Low-grade fever

### **If you suspect heat exhaustion:**

- Get person into a shady or air-conditioned location.
- Lay the person down and elevate the legs and feet slightly.
- Loosen or remove the person's clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water, not iced, or a sports drink containing electrolytes.
- Cool the person by sponging them with cool water and fanning.
- Monitor the person carefully. Heat exhaustion can quickly become heatstroke. If fever greater than 102 F, fainting, confusion, or seizures occur, dial 911 or call for emergency medical assistance.

## HEATSTROKE

Heatstroke is similar to heat cramps and heat exhaustion. It often results from heavy work in hot weather.

### **Risk Factors:**

- Older adults
- Obesity
- dehydration,
- alcohol use,
- cardiovascular disease
- certain medications

Heatstroke can be potentially life-threatening.

**Signs and symptoms may include:**

- Body temperature > 104 degrees
- Change in mental status, personality changes, confusion and coma
- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Elevated or lowered blood pressure
- Cessation of sweating
- Irritability, confusion or unconsciousness
- Fainting, which may be the first sign in older adults

**If you suspect heatstroke:**

- Move the person out of the sun and into a shady or air-conditioned space.
- Dial 911.
- Cool the person by covering him or her with damp sheets or by spraying with cool water.
- Direct air onto the person with a fan or newspaper.

**Health Category Definitions:**

**Health Alert FLASH:** conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

**Health Alert Priority:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

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