



Heat illness explained

Heat illness in sport most often occurs when a participant exercises vigorously in hot conditions. It presents as either heat exhaustion (more common) or heat stroke (rare but life threatening).

Symptoms may include: light headedness, dizziness, nausea, obvious fatigue or loss of skill and coordination, unsteadiness, cessation of sweating, confusion, aggressive or irrational behaviour, collapse or ashen grey pale skin.

Heat illness can be prevented though by knowing the risk factors and applying preventive strategies to minimise risks.

Factors that can increase the risk of heat illness include:

- high exercise intensity (e.g. exercising close to your personal capacity)
- lack of fitness (e.g. exercising at an intensity or duration beyond your current capacity)
- previous history of heat illness or heat intolerance
- age – junior and veteran participants are at higher risk due to their age
- illness and medical conditions (e.g. current or recent infectious illness or chronic health disorders at any air
- high air temperature and high humidity
- low air flow or movement (no wind)
- prolonged exposure to hot conditions, heavy clothing and protective equipment (e.g padding)
- lack of acclimatisation to being active in warm and humid conditions
- dehydration
- radiant heat from surfaces such as black asphalt, concrete or black rubberised synthetic surfaces can intensify hot conditions.

To learn more on heat illness and how to prevent its risk, SunSmart and Smartplay have developed a UV exposure and heat illness guide. The guide outlines practical steps to create a safe and enjoyable environment for participation in sport and physical activity.

To download the guide and the modifiable UV exposure and heat illness checklist visit www.sunsmart.com.au or www.smartplay.com.au.