

# Beating the heat; a lifesaving proposition

With the month of August has come a sweltering heat wave. With the heat, comes heat-related illnesses.

What would you do if someone near collapses from the heat?

The most important aspect of first aid is to cool the victim's overheated body. The first aid manuals offer various approaches to quick cooling.

Taking a cue from British Army medical experience in the tropics and deserts, an American medical unit serving in the Iranian desert during World War II adopted a unique but effective method.

The British medics has learned that an effective means of reducing body heat is to encourage evaporation of water from the skin. Evaporation carries the heat away much more effectively than does melting ice.

The desert medical teams placed the overheated patient nude on a table with a

web or rattan top that allowed circulation of air under his body. He was sprayed with water at room temperature, while large electric fans were played over his body.

This routine pioneered by the British medics proved quite effective.

To stay healthy in hot weather, drink lots of water. In the Iranian desert, temperatures, day and night, never got below 119 degrees. Healthy individuals kept going by drinking prodigious quantities of water and evaporating gallons of perspiration from their skin. Virtually all bodily liquid was evaporated. The average person passed a small amount of concentrated urine once a day.

Packing an overheated person in ice is one method, but heat loss is slower than with the technique of water sprays and fans.

If an airconditioned building or vehicle is available, the artificially cooled climate

can help to keep the patient cooled.

Heat illnesses can be quite serious, even fatal. First aid to cool the victim is important, and medical attention is urgently needed.

Swimming is fine exercise and good for cooling off on a hot day. Those with sinus or ear troubles should be careful about swimming.

Swimmers should know that the water is safe from pollution. A clear mountain stream looks attractive. It also may be loaded with germs. There are still cases of typhoid and dysentery from drinking untreated water.

Campers and hikers can disinfect water by boiling it or by commercial disinfectant tablets.

Flies, mosquitoes and ticks are troublesome in the hot months.

The above medical advice comes from Frank Chappell of the American Medical Association. The Post will frequently publish medical advice from reliable sources in The Doctor Says column.



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