

Heat Illness: Know the Signs

by Scott Stanley, MS

The summer months bring plenty of opportunity for fun and exercise in the sun. However, the summer months can also bring danger in the form of heat illness, or sunstroke, if the appropriate preventative measures are not practiced. Heat illness consists of heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Heat rash is basically skin irritation due to excessive sweating. It is simply a small cluster of red pimples or blisters that produce prickling or itching skin.

Heat cramps are severe muscle pains or spasms that tend to begin suddenly, typically in the arms, hands, legs, feet, and/or abdomen.

Heat exhaustion is an emergency situation, but not usually life-threatening. Its symptoms include weakness, fatigue, nausea, headache, fainting, dizziness, agitation, confusion, anxiety, slow or weak heart rate, excessive thirst, muscle aches and cramps, excessive sweating, and cold, clammy skin.

Heat stroke is a serious, life-threatening event. Its symptoms include body temperature of 104-106 degrees Fahrenheit, rapid heart rate, headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, shortness of breath, decreased sweating, fatigue, decreased urination, confusion or delirium, blood in the urine or stool, convulsions, and hot, flushed, dry skin.

Preventing Heat Illness

When physically active in the heat, it is important to follow these simple guidelines to prevent heat illness:

- » **Dress appropriately.** Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, preferably a fabric that can breathe such as cotton. Shorts and short-sleeves are best. Hats and sunglasses also provide protection.
- » **Stay hydrated.** You must remember to replace the fluid you lose when you sweat. Fluid consumption should occur before, during, and after activity. Water is best unless exercising longer than 60-90 minutes, in which case a sports drink is needed to replace electrolytes.

- » **Don't over-exert** yourself. Remember that exercising in the heat can be dangerous, so don't push yourself too far or ignore the signs of heat illness, such as feeling dizzy, faint, nauseous, confused, anxious, etc.
- » **Monitor the temperature** and humidity. Try to avoid strenuous exercise when the temperature approaches 80 degrees Fahrenheit and above, and/or the humidity approaches 75-80% and above.
- » **Acclimatize yourself.** Slowly increase the intensity of your exercise over the course of 7-14 days to allow your body to adjust to the heat and humidity.
- » **Timing is key.** Early morning or late evening are the best times for outdoor activity. The worst times are usually between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- » **Choose shade** whenever possible. Try to walk, run, or bike along shaded trails and pathways.
- » **Wear sunscreen.** In addition to being painful, sunburn can inhibit your body's ability to stay cool. Sunscreen helps to prevent sunburn, as well as skin cancer and sun poisoning.

Summer Activities are Cause for Massage

Summer is a busy time for all of us. But here are some reasons why you still may need to take the time to get a massage:

- » Golf
- » Gardening and yard work
- » Swimming
- » Tennis
- » Softball
- » Volleyball

All of these summer activities can lead to sore muscles. A massage can keep you active in whatever you choose without missing a beat. For more information about the benefits of massage therapy, or to schedule a massage with a qualified, licensed massage therapist, please contact Symmetry Wellness.

Back-to-School Stress - Why It Happens, How to Recognize It, and What to Do To Help Your Child Cope

by Sherrie St. Cyr

When most people think of stress, they think of adults, but kids experience stress, too. And some of the things we think of as most exciting in their lives are actually stressful for them. Going back to school each year can be one of those times.

Why It Happens

Think back to the last time you had a new job. You had a new boss and new co-workers. A whole new set of personalities and expectations to navigate. You probably got to interview with your boss and decide whether or not you wanted to work with that person. Your child is in the same situation each year, with a new boss and 15 or more new colleagues, none of which she got any say about. Not only that, she doesn't even have a cubicle to retreat to. Her desk is fully visible to everyone else in the room. She is ON all day.

There is a new schedule to get used to. If you've been used to sleeping late and now you have to get up early, that is stressful until your body adjusts.

Each new year comes with new expectations about your child's maturity level. These aren't always, or even usually, clearly communicated.

Urban legends maintained by children also have their place in this mix. "Oh, this year you are going to learn ALG-E-BRA and that is SOOOO hard". Children do this to reinforce their supremacy over lower classmen and it starts early. Negative expectations can set in and create stress.

How It Shows Up

If your child is stressed about going back to school, or starts to feel stressed after school starts, it is unlikely she is going to ask to talk to you and explain that she is feeling stressed and ask how you can help her cope. More likely, you will notice:

- » increased activity or restlessness
- » withdrawal from family and friends
- » irritability
- » physical symptoms like headaches, insomnia, or frequent tummy aches

What You Can Do To Help

Plan ahead for the schedule change. Start moving wakeup time up by 15 minutes each day. Start early enough that

your child will have several days of the same wakeup time before school starts. It is easier to focus on wakeup time rather than bedtime. You can't make them go to sleep, but you can make them wake up. This may not be pleasant, but it is much easier than trying to do it all at once and sending a child to school with too little sleep.

If your child does express concerns about the new school year, don't dismiss them. Do not pretend that everything about starting school is wonderful and exciting. It helps to acknowledge that you have felt that way about new situations in the past, but stop there. Don't lecture about how it all turned out OK.

Understand that children do not usually express their concerns with words – especially younger kids. They express their feelings through play and they are more likely to talk to you while you are doing something else together – like playing a game or taking a walk.

Don't over-schedule your child or let them over-schedule themselves. Allow a break after they get home from school and before they start their homework. Limit their extracurricular activities – just like adults, they need downtime to regenerate their energy.

Make sure your child has tools for mental relaxation. Children enjoy guided visualization, backrubs, bubble baths (or muscle soaks for guys). Research from the Heartmath Institute shows that children who learn a simple process of focusing on their breathing in a certain way not only experience less stress, but also achieve higher scores on standard achievement tests. This can be achieved with only a few weeks of practicing for as little as 15 minutes a day.

Managing stress is one of the life skills children are not usually taught directly, but assimilate as they move through various challenges. You can help by making the connection that adults experience stress, too, and teaching your children how to navigate change with grace and ease.



For more tips to help you and your children have a school year with less stress, you are invited to visit <http://www.kidsandstress.com>. To receive a weekly stress management tip by email, send a blank message to 52weeks@aweber.com. For information about personal stress coaching or classes, visit <http://www.heartwisdomway.com>. From Life Coach and Stress Management Specialist - Sherrie St. Cyr, LCSW

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