



Fitness and Recreation Center

Exercising in the Heat

After the long winter we endured, it sure is nice to feel the warmth of the sun this month. We've had some hot days and have more to come, so be certain to take care of yourself in the heat, especially if you are exercising.

Environmental conditions such as heat intensify the work your body is doing during exercise. When muscles contract they produce heat that must be released into the surrounding environment to keep your body cool. High heat and humidity do not let the body effectively cool itself which puts you at an increased risk for developing heat related illness.

Here are some simple strategies to minimize heat stress and avoid heat illness:

- Wear clothing that allows heat loss and evaporation (i.e. loose fitting, lightweight and light colored material)
- Reschedule exercise for a cooler time of day (i.e. morning, late afternoon/evening)
- Relocate exercise to a shady, breezy site or indoors with fans and air conditioning
- Reduce exercise intensity and add rest breaks to maintain the same target heart rate that you normally work at
- Avoid drinks containing caffeine, alcohol, or sugar
- Allow your body to adjust to the heat gradually. Generally, about two weeks of daily heat exposure is needed for your body to adapt. Perform light aerobic activity each day in warmer weather, gradually increasing the intensity.
- Drink plenty of cool fluids to prevent dehydration. Drink before you feel thirsty.
 - Before exercise drink:
 - 2 cups (16 oz) of cool water 2-3 hrs prior
 - 1 cup (8 oz) 10-20 minutes prior
 - During exercise drink some cool water or sports drink every 15-20 minutes
 - After exercise consume *at least* 2 cups (16 oz) of fluids

Be sure to watch for signs of dehydration: headache, thirst, weakness, irritability, fatigue, muscle cramps, nausea. Signs of heat exhaustion include profuse sweating, clammy skin, dizziness, nausea and headache. If you experience any of these symptoms, stop your activity and move to a cooler environment. Increase fluid intake and allow your body to cool down. Seek medical attention if condition continues or worsens. Someone with heat stroke may experience no perspiration, dry skin, labored breathing and high core temperature. With these symptoms, it is critical to seek medical attention immediately.

By taking precautions and planning ahead, you can turn a warm day into a great work out day. Be smart and take care of yourself!