

## **Playing It Safe: Summer Safety - Dehydration**

In the simplest terms, dehydration occurs when you lose more water than you take in. Staying hydrated is important to keep all your body functions running smoothly. Whenever you are working outdoors or in warm environments, you'll want to take extra precautions as summer heats up.

### **Water Loss**

On average, adults lose almost 10 cups of water a day simply by sweating, breathing and going to the bathroom. Along with water, you also lose electrolytes, which are vital because they help maintain the balance of fluids in the body. When you become dehydrated, your body cannot function, possibly resulting in heat stroke or even death.

### **Symptoms**

How do you know if you're dehydrated? You'll begin to experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Excessive thirst
- Sleepiness or tiredness
- Dry mouth
- Muscle weakness
- Headache
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

If you start to notice these warning signs, do not ignore them! Immediately take a break and give yourself time to recover.

### **Preventing Dehydration**

The best defense against dehydration is prevention. That sounds easy enough—consume lots of fluids and foods high in water such as fruits and vegetables—but determining how much fluid can be complicated. Unfortunately, determining appropriate water intake isn't an exact science, especially because so much depends on age, physical condition, activity level, location and body chemistry. The best overall approach is to make a conscious effort to stay hydrated, and continue drinking even if you don't feel thirsty. In hot weather, skip coffee or soda, and make water your beverage of choice.

### **Pace Yourself**

During periods of heavy exertion, take frequent water breaks. Adjust your intake to match your activity level and working conditions to stay healthy and alert.

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