Red Cross – Heat Related Emergencies

Heat-related illnesses are caused by overexposure to heat and dehydration.

A heat-related illness can result in heat stroke, a life-threatening condition.

There are 3 types of heat-related illnesses:

**Heat Cramps**
Cramps are painful muscle spasm, usually in legs or abdomen.

Care:
- Move person to a cool place.
- Give the person an electrolyte fluid like Gatorade or water.
- Slowly stretch the cramping muscle.
- Gently massage the surrounding area.
- The person should not take salt tablets.

**Heat Exhaustion**
More severe than heat cramps. Signs of heat exhaustion include:
Cool, moist pale, ashen (gray) or flushed skin.
Headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, and exhaustion.

Care:
- Move person to a cool place.
- Loosen or remove as much clothing as possible.
- Apply cool, wet clothes and remoisten periodically.
- Spray person with water.
- Fan the person.
- If conscious, give small amounts of a cool fluid – about 4 ounces every 15 minutes.
- Let the person rest in a comfortable position and watch carefully.
- If the condition does not improve, call 9-1-1.

**Heat Stroke**
Most severe heat-related illness. Often develops when the body’s systems become overwhelmed by heat and begin to stop functioning.

Care:
- Call 9-1-1 immediately.
- Rapidly cool the body by immersing person up to neck in cold water.