

After Exertional Heat Illness

Advice for patients and caregivers after discharge home or to community follow-up

You have improved enough to leave the event medical team, but some problems may recur over the next few hours to days. No blood tests were done today, so delayed muscle injury such as rhabdomyolysis cannot be completely ruled out on scene.

What to do over the next 24 to 48 hours

- Rest in a cool place. Use a fan or air conditioning if available.
- Drink water regularly. Oral rehydration or electrolyte drinks are reasonable adjuncts if you are still sweating or cramping; however, they should not replace water.
- Avoid sports, gym, running, hard physical work, alcohol, saunas, hot baths, and prolonged sun or heat exposure.
- Eat light meals when able to.
- Do not drive if you feel faint, confused, very tired, or unwell.
- Have a responsible adult check on you today if possible.
- **Have a low tolerance to seek further medical care at any point if you are concerned.**

What you may notice over the next few days

It is common to feel tired, washed out, headachy, sore, crampy, or less tolerant of heat for a day or two. Some people also notice poor appetite, mild nausea, poor sleep, or a "foggy" feeling. These should gradually improve, not worsen.

Watch for delayed muscle injury (rhabdomyolysis)

Rhabdomyolysis is muscle breakdown that can appear hours or even days after exertional heat illness.

- dark, red, or cola-coloured urine
- passing much less urine than usual
- worsening muscle pain, swelling, cramps, or weakness
- severe fatigue, increasing drowsiness, or feeling markedly worse again

Go to an Emergency Department immediately if you have:

- dark urine or much less urine than usual
- worsening muscle pain, swelling, weakness, or repeated cramps
- vomiting, ongoing diarrhoea, or you cannot keep fluids down
- worsening headache, dizziness, fainting, fever, or increasing drowsiness
- symptoms that are not clearly improving over the next few hours

Call 000 for an ambulance immediately if you have:

- confusion, unusual behaviour, or you are hard to wake
- collapse, seizure, or loss of consciousness
- trouble breathing or chest pain
- severe weakness so you cannot stand or walk safely
- you become very hot and unwell again, especially with confusion or collapse

Follow-up and return to activity

Arrange GP or community health follow-up within 24 to 48 hours for reassessment and further advice.

Do not return to hard exercise, sport, or work in the heat until you feel completely back to normal, are drinking and eating normally, and your urine output is normal.

If heat stroke was suspected, seek medical clearance before returning to exercise.

***This handout is for people well enough to leave pre-hospital or event medical care.
It does not replace urgent medical review if symptoms worsen.***