



Wilderness First Aid Scenario

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Victim 1 – Youth With Heat Exhaustion

SUMMARY

It's late August, and your troop is on Day 3 of a weeklong hike in a state park in eastern North Carolina. The terrain has become a little more level, so the troop decides to pick up speed to try to cut a day off their hike. About mid-afternoon, Ricardo, who is 15 years old, tells his buddy that his stomach hurts, and he's really tired and needs to rest. His skin is flushed, and he says he has a headache.

SCENARIO DETAIL

The weather is sunny, 85 degrees F, and very humid with calm winds. Although Ricardo ate a good breakfast and lunch on the trail, his water bottle is still more than half full. He has not urinated since before breakfast. He says he felt fine in the morning. The entire troop is trained in first aid, but no one has WFA training.

STUDENT RESPONSE

1. Scene safety:
Ensure that the scene safety assessment is completed.
2. Primary assessment:
Ricardo is alert and oriented.
3. Secondary assessment:
 - a. Vital signs:
LOC: A&Ox4
Heart rate: 100
Respirations: 28
Skin: Flushed
 - b. **SAMPLE**
S – As above
A – No known allergies
M – Benadryl
P – Seasonal allergies
L – Ramen noodles at 12:30 p.m.
E – Temperature 85 degrees, irregular terrain that is leveling out

POST-SCENARIO DEBRIEF

- Did the troop check the scene for safety issues?
Before treatment, the area around the resting spot will need to be assessed for hazards. This could be done very quickly and should not delay care.
- What signs and symptoms did you find?
Abdominal pain, fatigue, flushing, headache, lack of urination, and rapid pulse.
- What is the individual's problem?
The victim is experiencing heat exhaustion. Discuss the differences between dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Heat stroke can be identified by early symptoms/signs: neurological changes, flushed skin, and a lack of sweat response. Heat stroke is a life-threatening event, and the treatment includes activation of an EMS system. This a true emergency!



+ Wilderness First Aid Scenario **Heat-Related Illness**

- How would you provide care?
Have the victim rest in a shaded area, remove their backpack and any excess clothing, and provide a drink of cool water—or a diluted, noncaffeinated sports drink, if available. Fan the victim to help them cool off if you have the resources. If there is no improvement, the victim will need advanced medical care. Do not give salt or salt tablets.
- Key Point: The ramen noodles would have provided a significant level of salt.
- What items do you need?
Cool water, something to provide shade, and a means of fanning.
- What would happen if heat exhaustion were left untreated?
It could progress.
- Does this situation require an evacuation?
No, unless there is no improvement within 30 minutes.
- Could this situation have been prevented?
Yes. Ongoing, adequate hydration, occasional rest periods, and paying attention to frequency and color of urinary output could have prevented this heat-related illness.
- Who was trained in WFA?
No one on this trek had the training. Discuss the requirements for WFA training and when this training is recommended. Anyone age 14 and up can take a wilderness first aid course, and it is recommended that all groups on high-adventure treks in any location where access to advanced medical care is one hour or more away have someone with WFA training. All four BSA high-adventure bases require at least one participant on each trek to be BSA WFA certified, and Philmont Scout Ranch requires at least two participants per trek to have this certification.