



It doesn't get much better than a week at summer camp or a backpacking trek. It's easy to get caught up in the fun on a hot summer day and not pay attention to how the heat is affecting your body—but ignoring the heat can lead to illness and death. This can be avoided by acclimatization, planning, resting, keeping an eye on each other, and drinking plenty of water. Review these lessons learned to help properly prepare for a summer of fun.

Incident Review #1

On July 27, 2005, thousands of Scouts and Scouters hiked from their campsites to the National Scout Jamboree Arena Show at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia. Due to delays, high heat, humidity, and an inadequate supply of water, more than 300 attendees succumbed to a variety of heat-related illnesses. Some required hospitalization. The incident was so chaotic that the local emergency medical service declared it a “mass casualty event.” All participants recovered, but the reputations of the BSA and the jamboree were tarnished.

Key Points

- Make sure to have an adequate supply of drinking water available to all.
- When planning, take into account that participants must be allowed time to adjust to different climates (same issue with elevation), and schedule events to coincide with weather norms or area trends.
- Have contingency plans in place, and be willing to pull the plug on an event when circumstances change or when acceptable thresholds are exceeded such as a high heat index.

Incident Review #2

A 17-year-old Boy Scout collapsed and died about halfway into a 20-mile hike while working on the Hiking merit badge. Temperatures exceeded 90 degrees and humidity was high.

Key Points

- Plan ahead for long hikes: Make sure you have an adequate food and water supply, and consider weather and terrain conditions.
- If you are going on an extended trek, make sure all participants prepare physically and mentally for the experience. Work up to the trek under similar conditions.
- Evacuation and response plans will need to be different for remote areas or where normal means of communication, like cellphone coverage, are not available.

“What is your favorite unit hydration slogan or chant?”





Incident Review #3

On a hot day at camp, a 12-year-old Scout showed symptoms of dehydration including headache, stomachache, vomiting, and thirst. All vital signs were normal but the Scout admitted to drinking very little, and the majority of what he had consumed was sugary liquid.

Key Points

- Make sure everybody stays hydrated and that they have ready access to water at all times. Those participating in remote activities should carry water bottles.
- Plain water, supplemented with sports drinks, is good for keeping hydrated and treating mild dehydration. Juice and milk are also appropriate.



Incident Review #4

A 13-year-old Scout reported not feeling well. He adjusted his insulin pump and was told to hydrate. His condition returned to normal in about 30 minutes. After lunch he resumed participation in activities, but soon reported feeling unwell again. He was transported to a local hospital and diagnosed with dehydration and heat exhaustion with complications from diabetes.

Key Points

- Parents, Scouts, and leaders need to discuss known risk factors and have an agreed-upon plan for Scouts with medical conditions aggravated by heat.
- Know the signs and symptoms of heat illness, and take the proper steps to avoid and treat. Remind Scouts that it is OK to opt out of activities and to self-report not feeling well.



Incident Review #5

A Scouter, age 44, was working at an Order of the Arrow (OA) camp cleanup. The Scouter became ill, and the medical staff found that he was dehydrated with a severe headache, vomiting, and elevated blood pressure. Emergency medical service was called and he was transported to a local hospital for care.

Key Points

- Non-unit Scout activities like this one can pose a challenge since activity leaders may not be aware of special conditions of contingent participants. That is why a pre-activity review of health histories is important.
- Urine color is a good indicator of hydration. Infrequent urination can be a sign of dehydration.
- Make sure everybody keeps an eye on each other, and let them know they must stop work if someone is showing the initial signs of heat illness. The buddy system works great for this.



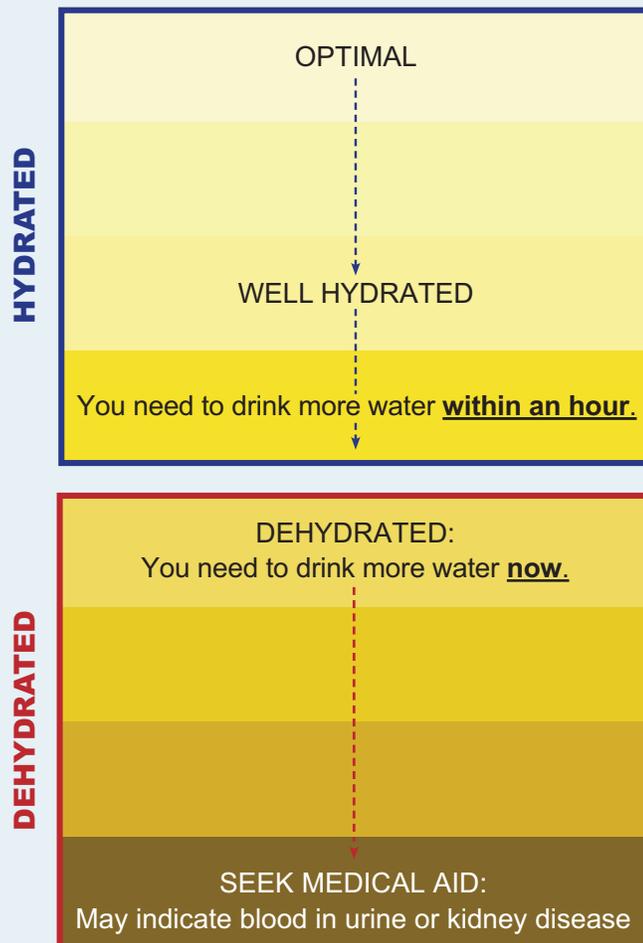


Discussion Questions

- Does the camp or high-adventure base you are attending have special risk factors that might affect you or other participants?
- Name the early warning signs of heat illnesses.
- What is the difference between heat stress and heat stroke?
- What health and physical conditions make people more susceptible to heat-related illnesses?
- What planning and preparation needs to be done to make sure you avoid heat-related illnesses?

“If your urine is dark, you have missed the mark.”

Urine Color Chart*



*This color chart is not for clinical use.

Resources

- *Boy Scout Handbook*
- *Fieldbook*
- *Hiking and Camping* merit badge pamphlets
- Annual Health and Medical Record and associated risk factors
- Council Program Guidelines: Regarding Response to Adverse Heat and Humidity Conditions (No. 680-030), <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/680-030.doc>
- BSA Health and Safety Committee Research and Development Task Force Statement: Use of Energy Drinks in Scouting Activities, http://www.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/Energy_Drinks_Statement.pdf
- Health and Safety Alert: Understanding Heat Index and Hydration (June 2012), <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/alerts/>
- National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH)—Heat-Related Illness, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heatrelillness.html>
- Heat index/urine color chart card artwork (680-022), <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/680-022.pdf>

