

Outdoors health tips from the Posse:

Summer heat

If I were forced to pick a favorite season in Colorado, I would have to pick summer. I can go outside without having to wear six layers of clothes, hunting season and fall is just over the horizon, and slippery roads is a distant memory in the rearview mirror.



Mark Rackay
Tips from the Posse

My old friend Murph, of Murphy's Law fame, follows me around in the summer months. I guess it is because I am outside more in the summer and it gives him more opportunity to wreak his special breed of havoc.

One area of our life that requires special consideration during the summer is our workout routine. This would include all our activities that are physical in nature, like hiking, backpacking, kayaking, exercising and many others.

Whenever you exercise in hot weather, you put extra stress on your body and run the risk of serious illness. As the air temperature and humidity rise when you exercise, your body's core temperature can soar.

Blood circulating through your skin is what warms you in cold and cools you in the heat. As you heat up, more blood circulates, leaving less blood for your muscles, which thereby increases your heart rate. If the humidity is high, the sweat does not evaporate as quickly, and your temperature soars even higher. It is all a domino effect and Murph is at the controls, waiting to shut you down with a heat related sickness.

The illness can start out as heat cramps or muscle cramps. These are painful contractions that occur with exercise. You may also feel muscle spasms or firmness in the affected muscle.

Another illness is called heat syncope, which is a feeling of lightheadedness or dizziness occurring after standing for a long period of time. It can also strike from standing too quickly after sitting for a long period of time.

Someone who is a jogger or runner can experience exercise-associated collapse. This malady can cause fainting and lightheadedness immediately after exercising. It can occur immediately after you stop running or exercising.

While none of these are any fun, it only gets



Using one of these regularly is the best way to prevent heat related illnesses. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

worse from here with heat exhaustion. Your body temperature can rise to 104 degrees and you can have nausea, vomiting, headache and fainting, sweating and cold, clammy skin. If you don't treat it immediately, it will lead to heatstroke.

Heatstroke is a full-blown, three-alarm emergency because it can lead to brain damage, organ failure and even death in a short period of time. The temperature of your body will exceed 104 degrees and the skin will be dry from lack of sweating. You can develop confusion, heart rhythm problems, fainting, nausea, vomiting, visual problems and fatigue. Immediately contact 911 if you suspect these symptoms in someone.

The secret to all these heat related illnesses is to prevent them. Start by allowing your body some time to acclimate from the heat. It is similar to my Florida friends who show up here during the hunting seasons and complain how cold it is. They need sometime to acclimate.

It can take seven to 10 days of workout for your body to get used to the heat. Ex-

perts say we should try and keep our body temperature at or below 101 degrees. I have not figured out how to exercise and take my temperature, so I just guess on that one.

Sixty minutes is that maximum amount of time you want any strenuous activity in the heat. Hikers and backpackers should slow their pace and keep that core temperature down.

I know that we discuss fluid intake to the point we tire of hearing about it. I fight the fluids all year long, so summer heat is no exception. I can drink a gallon an hour and my doctor will still tell me I am dehydrated. I know that if you wait until you are thirsty, you've waited too long.

If you are running, packing, biking or hiking in the heat, hit the water bottle 16 to 24 ounces a couple hours before you start the excursion. While out, have 6 to 8 ounces every 20 minutes, throughout the activity.

If your activity is going to be for a longer period of time you are going to want to add some electrolytes and some

carbohydrates to your body. For me, that is a Gatorade and a Clif Bar and it is easily packed along on the trip.

One of the smartest things a jogger or power walker can do is make your jaunt when it is cooler out. Most often, that is in the early morning hours. I know it sounds crazy, but I really like going for a run at 5 a.m., when it is cool out and the sun has not come up yet.

In my neighborhood, the only person out at 5 a.m. is the carrier for the Montrose Daily Press, which really makes for a nice and peaceful start of the day. Besides, Murphy likes to sleep in during the summer, so he is not out yet at that hour. ●

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and an avid hunter who travels all across North America in search of adventure, and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

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