

## Beware Of Heat Related Illnesses

Here in the Puget Sound area we usually don't have to worry about the effects of hot weather on our motorcycles and ourselves. But thanks to our motorcycles we can quickly find ourselves riding in hot weather that takes a toll on our motorcycles and us. Riding a motorcycle in the heat takes special equipment, maintenance, and operator awareness.

Make sure you are aware of the symptoms of *dehydration*, *heat exhaustion*, and *heat stroke*.

*Dehydration* is caused by losing water and salts faster than they are being replaced. Symptoms are thirst, flushed face, dry and warm skin, dizziness, weakness, cramping extremities, or headache. Stop riding and seek shade or air conditioning. Drink additional water. Rest until you feel restored.

*Heat exhaustion* is caused by the loss of large amounts of fluid through sweating, and sometimes with excessive loss of salts. The body can no longer dissipate heat adequately. Symptoms are sweating, clammy and moist skin, pale or flushed complexion, extreme weakness or fatigue, nausea, or headache. Extreme cases may cause vomiting or loss of consciousness. Body temperature may be normal or slightly high. The best treatment is to call 911. Drink water and apply cool compresses or ice packs to the neck, groin, and armpits. Remember, seek professional help.

*Heat stroke* is the most serious of heat-related health problems. The body's temperature regulatory system fails and sweating becomes inadequate. There is little warning that a crisis stage has been reached. The body can no longer dissipate heat at all and severe organ damage may occur. Death may occur if treatment is not received immediately. Symptoms are a temperature of 106 F, hot dry, flushed or spotted skin, severe headache, bizarre behavior, confusion, and possible convulsions and coma. Treatment is to call 911 immediately. This is a medical emergency! Reduce the person's body heat immediately by all means possible. Move them to a cool area, thoroughly soak their clothing with water, and vigorously fan their body to increase cooling. Make sure they get professional care. This is their only hope for a successful recovery.

This is not a complete guide to the diagnosis and treatment of heat-related illnesses, just an introduction so you will be aware of some of their symptoms and treatments. The June 2004 *Wing World* has an excellent article on hot weather hazards. Don't forget your motorcycle needs more attention for hot weather riding.

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