



Always consult with a veterinarian that you feel comfortable with before diagnosing or treating any disease on your own. This information is for reference only.

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## Hyperthermia

### Issue Description

*Hyperthermia, in its advanced state referred to as heat stroke or sunstroke, is an acute condition which occurs when the body produces or absorbs more heat than it can dissipate. It is usually caused by prolonged exposure to high temperatures. The heat-regulating mechanisms of the body eventually become overwhelmed and unable to effectively deal with the heat, causing the body temperature to climb uncontrollably. Hyperthermia is a medical emergency which requires immediate treatment.*

### Other Names

*Heat Stroke, Sunstroke*

### Difference Between Hyperthermia And Fever

A fever occurs when the body sets the core temperature to a higher temperature, through the action of the pre-optic region of the anterior hypothalamus. For example, in response to a bacterial or viral infection, the body will raise its temperature to allow the immune system to work better and to deteriorate the condition of the invaders. In contrast, hyperthermia occurs when the body temperature is raised without the consent of the heat control centers.

### Symptoms

Signs of heat exhaustion include heavy panting, hyperventilation (deep breathing), increased salivation early then dry gums as the heat prostration progresses, weakness, confusion or inattention, vomiting or diarrhea and sometimes bleeding. As the condition progresses towards heat prostration or heat stroke there may be obvious paleness or graying to the gums, shallowing of the breathing efforts and eventually slowed or absent breathing efforts, vomiting and diarrhea that may be bloody and finally seizures or coma. Temperatures above 105 degrees Fahrenheit are dangerous.

Pinch a little skin between your thumb and forefinger on the dog's back. If when released, the skin does not pop back into place like it should, this usually indicates dehydration is occurring. (You should have performed this test under normal conditions to have an idea how this normally works because younger, fatter dogs will have more elasticity than will older, skinnier dogs).

### Treatment

- Immediately move the dog to a cool, shady place.
- Wet or immerse the dog in cool (not ice cold) water.
- Fan wet dog vigorously to promote evaporation to help cool the dog's body temperature.
- Do not apply ice as this constricts blood flow and will inhibit the body's attempts to cool itself.
- Allow the dog to have small drinks of water every few minutes, lick ice, ice cream or a popsicle. Use broth in water to encourage drinking.
- If recovery is slow, take the dog to a veterinarian as soon as possible.

### Prevention

Dogs cannot cool themselves on hot days since panting becomes less effective the hotter it gets. This is why it is important not to leave your dog in the car in the summer, even with the window cracked open. A good guideline is to cool your dog or give your dog water when you feel the need for yourself.

The key to heatstroke is to recognize it as early as possible and to immediately begin bringing your dog's body temperature down to 103F.

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