

WHAT IS HEAT STROKE ?

Heat stroke is a form of hyperthermia with accompanying physical and neurological signs. It can be a true medical emergency that can be fatal if not properly and promptly treated.

The body normally generates heat as a result of metabolism, and the body is usually able to dissipate the heat by radiation through the skin or by evaporation of sweat. However in extreme heat, high humidity, or vigorous exertion under the sun these techniques can fail. Also dehydration can contribute, as you cannot sweat fast enough to dissipate the heat.

The population most susceptible to heat stroke are infants, the elderly (often with associated heart, kidney or lung diseases, or on certain medications) and athletes and outdoor workers physically exerting themselves under the sun.

Common Symptoms and Signs include:

- High body temperature
- The absence of sweating with red, hot or flushed dry skin
- Rapid pulse, and difficulty breathing
- Strange behaviour or hallucinations
- Confusion and agitation
- Disorientation, possible seizures
- Coma, even death

Treatment of a victim of Heat Stroke

Immediate first aid if required to avoid permanent organ damage. First and foremost cool the person. Move the person to a shady area, remove their clothes, apply cool or tepid water to the skin, fan the patient to promote sweating, and consider the role of icepacks to the groin and armpits. Call 000 and get further advice for treatment, while waiting for the ambulance.

The most important measure to prevent heat stroke are to avoid getting dehydrated and avoid vigorous physical activities in extreme hot weather. **For every hour in the sun you should be drinking a litre of water.** Avoid alcohol, coffee or tea as these drinks can contribute to dehydration. Wear a hat, sunglasses, light, loose clothing and take frequent breaks to hydrate yourself.

RECALL

We let the X'mas / New year time slide by without activating our recall system as many people have holidays and are away. There is now quite a back log and for those who are requiring repeat pathology, the blood request forms will be in the mail to you shortly. Other reasons for recall may include blood pressure check, skin checks, pap smears and numerous other clinical indications.

ASFMC, in particular Dr. Mitchell has a medico-legal responsibility to ensure previously documented abnormalities are followed up. We appreciate that other clinics in Alice Springs do not do this but we are trying extremely hard to provide thorough, holistic health care. Due to the transient nature of Alice Springs, people are very mobile. Due to our increasing patient numbers we are experimenting with how to continue to provide high level health care to those that nominate ASFMC as their primary health care provider.

"On the day" appointments we will keep for pre-existing patients and we will inactivate patients who ignore repeated recall flags. Getting into any clinic for a cold or gastro condition may be appropriate; not so for ongoing management for a chronic medical condition. Swapping between clinics often is a recipe for disaster as each GP, let alone practice, is very different with the type of care they offer. If your contact details are about to change please notify us. If you do nominate another GP as your usual practitioner we will not be able to provide health care at ASFMC due to our limited capacity.

ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

17 Stuart Highway
PO Box 4246
Alice Springs NT 0871
Phone: 08 8952 7774
Fax: 08 8952 6774
E-mail: admin@alicefamilymedical.com.au
Website: www.alicefamilymedical.com.au



ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

NEWSLETTER 5/08

Doesn't time fly!! Mid—January and 2008 already seems like it is speeding away. The staff at ASFMC sincerely hope everyone had a relaxing X'mas break and great start to the New Year.

Welcome to another year—and the heat of mid-summer in Alice Springs. We did not quite break the record for the number of consecutive days above 40 degrees, but came very close.

Our hours are back to normal, and we are able to offer extended evening sessions on Monday and Wednesday again (last appointment at 7pm). This extends our capacity, and seems popular with our patient population.

This newsletter is an opportunity for us to both inform and educate our patients about some upcoming changes to practice policy and topics of interest.



**Please respect the no smoking
policy on the entire grounds of
the clinic.**

Proud to be working with the community
to improve Central Australian Health

**17 Stuart Highway
Entrance off Kekwick Ave
Parking at rear
Phone 08 8952 7774 ALL HOURS**

VACCINES—TRAVEL ADVICE

ASFMC stocks a wide range of travel vaccinations and is currently in the process of attaining accreditation to also be a Yellow Fever provider. Susie our practice nurse can be the one to give the immunisations once an appointment with the GP has been done to discuss all relevant travel advice. The more information you have about the specifics of your itinerary and exactly where you will be travelling to, the more accurate our travel advice can be. Again please be aware of the time this may take to discuss in detail, including giving the immunisations, so consider booking a longer appointment if you feel there is a lot to cover. Our receptionists can give you the exact cost of all vaccines on request. More obscure vaccines may require a prescription. The cost of the vaccines and GP / nurse consult may be a valid tax deduction for work purposes



BREASTSCREEN

BreastScreen Australia **provides FREE** screening to all women over the age of 40 years but specifically targets women aged 50 - 69 years.

Call **132050** to make an appointment

for your free mammogram every 2 years

Be breast aware—if you notice any change from the normal look and feel of your breasts, such as lumps, unusual pain, nipple discharge of unusual appearance, see your GP or health care provider as soon as possible.

A breast check can be done in a standard appointment, but if you wish to discuss other things, or have your routine pap smear, then a double appointment would be recommended.

ASTHMA—CARE PLANS

Asthma is a disease of the airways of the lungs and symptoms can include:

- Wheezing
- Chest Tightness
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath

If you experience these symptoms more than 2 x a week or need to use your reliever puffer more than 3 x week it might mean that your asthma is poorly controlled. Most people can manage their asthma well. The more you learn about your asthma the better you can manage it by:

- following a personal **written asthma action plan**
- taking asthma medications as advised by your GP **even when you are well**
- finding out **what triggers your asthma** and avoiding or managing these triggers where possible
- seeing your GP for **regular check-ups** to monitor and control your asthma

Spirometry is used for both diagnosis and assessment of severity of asthma. Most adults and children over 7 years of age can perform spirometry. At ASFMC this service is provided by our practice nurse Susie, and takes >30 minutes to perform. It involves breathing into our machine linked to the computer to see how healthy a person's lungs are. The person is then put on our nebuliser and given salbutamol (ventolin) and then the test is repeated. **This test costs \$35** to do, and attracts a rebate of \$15.75.

A Care Plan is done when at least 2 asthma related consultations occur within 12 months for a patient with moderate to severe asthma, noting that the review visit is planned. To complete an Asthma Cycle of Care the GP / nurse must:

1. Document diagnosis and assessment of asthma severity and level of asthma control
2. Review the patient's use of, and access to, asthma related medications and devices
3. Provide a written asthma action plan
4. Provide asthma self management education
5. Review the written or documented asthma action plan



www.asthmaaustralia.org.au www.nationalasthma.org.au

GLYCAEMIC INDEX (GI)



The GI is a method of rating carbohydrate in foods (between 0—100) based on their effects on blood glucose levels. Foods with a lower GI contain carbohydrates that are digested and absorbed more slowly thereby having a lesser impact on blood glucose levels.

Research shows that including lower GI foods as part of a healthy eating plan may be beneficial if you have:

- diabetes, or are at risk of developing pre-diabetes
- raised cholesterol levels and are at risk of heart disease
- weight concerns

What do the numbers mean?? They are to be used as a guide only as individual foods do not have the same response in all people.

LOW GI foods < 55 MODERATE GI foods 55—70

HIGH GI foods > 70



Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

This is the name for a group of viruses that can cause skin warts, genital warts and some cancers. Anyone who has ever had sexual contact could have HPV. It is so common that close to 90% of people will have had genital HPV infection at some time in their lives. There are certain types of HPV that can lead to cervical cell changes that may lead to cervical cancer. Regular pap smears are still essential because the HPV vaccine does not prevent all cervical cancers. Pap smears detect abnormal changes to cells in the cervix so treatment can start before cancer develops. ASFMC is running our **4th FREE Gardasil clinic on Thursday 7th Feb 2008. Places are strictly limited, book at reception.**