

HEAT ILLNESSES: Heat Cramps and Rash

Radio Novella Transcript (translated from Spanish)

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Narrator: Welcome. This is an educational radio novella about rashes and heat cramps and what we can do to protect ourselves.

Pedro: Nurse Elena, I can't take this pain anymore and it stings. I have a terrible cramp in my calf.

Nurse: Sit down on the grass and relax, little Pedro. You've been running a lot in this heat, haven't you? Tell me, have you been drinking enough water today?

Pedro: Of course, I've been drinking as much as I can, but I sweat a lot.

Nurse: Water or soda?

Pedro: Both, sometimes juice. They're all liquids, you know.

Nurse: Yes, but if you drink beverages with caffeine they'll cause you to dehydrate faster. That's why water is the best.

Pedro: Ow!

Nurse: Pedro, I'm really worried about you. Do you know what it means when you get cramps, especially when you've been exercising in this terrible heat?

Pedro: Ow! No!

Nurse: This is a sign of heat cramps. If this isn't treated immediately, it can turn into something much worse like a heat *stroke*.

Pedro: Then what should I do?

Nurse: First we'll have to put you in the shade, and I'll fan you to cool you down. And you'll have to drink water or juice so they can rehydrate you and also replace the carbohydrates and electrolytes that you've lost from sweating. They're like sports drinks.

Pedro: Nurse Elena, what causes those cramps?

Nurse: It's because you've lost salt by sweating so much, and now there isn't enough in your body. And that's what causes the cramps.

Pedro: Not enough salt? But I thought eating too much of it causes high blood pressure. My doctor has even made me go on a low-salt diet.

Nurse: Here, cool down under this tree. Maybe that's what caused the cramps: People who don't eat enough salt have a greater chance of suffering from heat cramps. Because of that they have less salt in their bodies, and so lose more water when they sweat.

Pedro: I see. So I'll be okay if I just take salt pills?

Nurse: Don't even think about it; that's crazy.

Pedro: But why?

Nurse: Having too much salt can also be very dangerous.

Pedro: So what should I do?

Nurse: On hot days it would be a good idea to have sports drinks that have a good balance of salt and other minerals. You could also have water with some salted peanuts, so you can get the salt you need.

Pedro: How much should someone drink?

Nurse: You should always remember the half every half rule: that is, to have half a liter, or a fourth of an ounce, every half hour when you're working or playing soccer in really hot weather like today.

Pedro: And what's considered really hot weather?

Nurse: You have so many questions. Look, there are three conditions that make hot days dangerous: high temperatures, high humidity, and no wind.

Pedro: Just like today. Nurse Elena, ever since it got hot, I've been really itchy.

Nurse: That sounds like rash, which can also be caused by hot weather. Let's have a look. Where does it itch?

Pedro: ...on my love handles, on the back of my neck, around my waist, and below my armpits. Don't scold me; I know I have to lose weight.

Nurse: Don't be embarrassed, I've got love handles too. This is a classic case: your clothes rub against your skin and then a rash forms. That's what's making you itchy.

Pedro: What causes this, nurse Elena?

Nurse: Sometimes your skin stays moist because the folds of your skin or wearing clothes that don't breathe well, like waterproof clothing or leather belts, prevent sweat from evaporating. These things cause sweat glands to be blocked, which then cause them to be irritated and swollen, making a rash.

Pedro: What should I do, nurse?

Nurse: To prevent getting a rash, keep your skin clean and try as best as possible. If you don't do this, the red blisters can become infected and cause more problems. Clean them and dry them well when you get home. You can also use a lotion to help stay dry. It's called calamine lotion. It's usually used to treat rashes caused by poisonous plants.

Pedro: Thank you Nurse Elena for all the information. Now I know more about rashes and heat cramps.

Narrator: Thank you for listening to our radio novella about heat sickness brought to you with grants from by the National Institute of Health, the University of Washington in Seattle, and THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST AGRICULTURAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (PNASH) CENTER.

