

HEAT ILLNESS
by Jan Frazee
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Part of our training as canine handlers involved in search and rescue deals with our subjects' medical emergencies and avoiding medical emergencies of our own. We are familiar with the effects of dehydration on the human body with its symptoms of loss of appetite, dry mouth, reduction in urine, flushed skin, impatience, apathy, difficulty in concentration, increased heart rate, dizziness, labored breathing in exercise, mental confusion, and, finally, delirium, spastic muscles, circulatory insufficiency and death. A recent article in the Arizona Republic noted an alarming heat illness rise among Grand Canyon hikers - hypothermia, or water intoxication. The condition mimics heat exhaustion in its early stages but occurs in some hikers who drink too much water and eat too little food or take water-depleting medication. Search and rescue workers are constantly reminded, and rightfully so, to drink lots of water, but some people work long hours on a handful of dried fruit. In so doing, they deplete their bodies of electrolytes, particularly sodium. Ranger Bill Vandergraff is quoted as recommending that people eat throughout the day, including salty foods like saltine crackers, gorp or pretzels, and drink not just water but also water with electrolytes. Advanced symptoms of hypothermia include confusion (including mistaking non-edible items for food) and unconsciousness.