

How to beat the heat before it beats you

Dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are no joke and can ruin the best-laid plans. Follow these guidelines for safe summer paddling.

By Susan Green

Sea kayaking entails various physical risks but we can take simple measures when paddling to help us avoid common medical problems: dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. These are three distinct problems although dehydration often plays a role in the other two.

Dehydration

When kayaking, dehydration results from not drinking sufficient liquids or drinking the wrong kind to make up for fluids lost mostly through perspiration and urination. (It can also result from fluid loss caused by vomiting or severe bleeding). We all know the initial symptom of dehydration: thirst! That can be followed by weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, passing very dark urine, and fainting. Medications we take or any coffee, tea, or alcohol imbibed may also act as diuretics – sucking the water out of our bodies. Dehydration can occur at any time of year – regardless of the temperature outside.

Here are strategies for avoiding dehydration:

1. Don't wait for symptoms to appear! Plan to rehydrate on a schedule, perhaps every half hour, regardless of whether you feel thirsty. Remind your paddling partners to rehydrate, too.
2. Drink good old plain water, which is quickly absorbed, or water spiked with electrolytes (I like to carry Endurolytes "Fizz" tablets) and always take with you more than you think you will need. Note that "sports drinks" often contain large amounts of sugar, which can slow absorption, so choose your drink wisely! Keep in mind that over-hydration, though much less common, is equally dangerous.
3. Consider using a water bladder attached to the back of your PFD. With a tube hanging over your shoulder, you can easily rehydrate while continuing to paddle. Or place a water bladder on your front deck – it will still be easier to take a sip from than from a bottle you need to retrieve from a day hatch or from under the bungees.

Here is a cautionary tale as told to me by our very own Ralph Heimlich: "It was the second day of one of those bloody hot weekends and I ran out of water in my hydration bladder before the paddle ended. Being



Moyerphotos/Creative Commons

a typical male, I didn't stop and get water out of my hatch, so was pretty parched by the time we landed at Caledon, 24 miles from Leesylvania, our camp on day 1. I thought I'd done a pretty good job of rehydrating before going to sleep in my hammock, but when I woke up in the morning and got out of the hammock, I passed out. I attribute it to a) still being dehydrated, b) having my feet up and head down in the hammock, then getting up quickly and "sloshing" my circulation all over the place, c) the effects of my blood pressure medicine, a diuretic, in screwing up my pressure....I recovered that morning with food and drink and was able to paddle to

the take out. The trip was cut short by distance and heat, however, since we landed at Dahlgren Wayside (301 bridge) rather than paddling all the way to Westmoreland State Park."

Dehydration can contribute to heat exhaustion, shock, and even cardiac arrest when severe. We're surrounded by water when we paddle....Let's drink some....and then drink some more!

Heat Exhaustion

Summers in the mid-Atlantic can be brutally hot, so the water is a great place to be! But we need to be mindful of protecting our bodies' ability to regulate its temperature. When we allow ourselves to get too hot and our core temperature rises above the normal 98.6 degrees F, our bodies respond, initially by causing us to perspire, so that evaporation can cool us off. This can lead to dehydration, fatigue, dizziness, and headache. As symptoms progress, the skin can look pale and feel clammy. Nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps, and dark yellow urine may follow. Elevated heart and respiration rates also may occur. Heat exhaustion has set in!

There are a few easy things we can do to help prevent heat exhaustion when paddling: Wear a hat with a large brim. Drink plenty of water. During breaks, take any opportunity to find or build shade. Cool off during breaks with a nice "wallow" in the shallows by the beach.

If you or a paddling companion begins to exhibit any of the symptoms of heat exhaustion, consider the following:

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Suzanne Farace, Mike Hamilton, Pete Hohmann, Greg Hollingsworth, Luci Hollingsworth, Paula Hubbard, Bev Kesterson, James Kesterson, Jenny Plummer-Welker, Ed Schiller, John Sharrock, Craig Smith, Peter Stockmaster, Mike Ward, Greg Welker, William Woodruff, Moulton Avery, Catriona Miller, Ronald McDonald, Bela Mariassy, Rob Pearlman, Reggie Reid, Yvonne Thayer, and Jim Zawlocki.

David Compton and Teresa Pendleton, our generous hosts, do a lot of work to prepare for our arrival. They order the portapotties, bake the cakes, get the yard mowed, put up signs everywhere, and so much more. The first faces to greet campers this year, the parking crew, included Angie Lovett, Tom Blount, Yancy Bodenstein, Wendy Baker Davis, John Houghton, Moulton Avery, and Demetrius Wren. John covered the Friday night parking duty so that others could join the night paddle. Maxine Mead took care of registrations as they were submitted during the winter and organized the check-in process. The laminated nametags are a remarkably effective way of managing key pieces of information in a small, durable package to keep every student on track. Yancy and Demetrius tended to the campfire ring. On Friday evening, Brian led a meeting for instructors and Paula offered them an on-water refresher training. Others helped on the night paddle as lead, sweep, or safety-support. Kathy Haduch and Bob Gordon helped troubleshoot the coffee making procedure so that the process went smoothly for Kristina McCoy and Brian at 5:00 a.m. A special thanks is due to those who tended to the least pleasant of maintenance tasks, Sarah Guilick, who took care of regularly restocking the portapotties, and to Jimmy McArdle, Christine Riegel, and Gary Field, who tended to removing the trash.

After classes finished Saturday afternoon, Greenland rolling demonstrations by Mike Hamilton, Jenny Plummer-Welker, and Chris



Yvonne Thayer launches for the night paddle. Photo/Catriona Miller

Beckman, showed how smooth and elegant rolls can be. The rest of us could only look on with awe and envy. Dinner involved moving a lot of food down the hill from the house, grilling many burgers and dogs, and setting out all the other food for the buffet line. Our grill masters were Greg Welker and Jim Zawlocki. The set-up team included Yvonne, Alexandre, Monyka Berrocosa, Poonam Bhogal, Dick Rock, Therese Hillsman, and Patricia Jones.

The runners were Demetrius, Jimmy McArdle, Gail Addis, Lois Wyatt, Norman Peters, and Larry Ichter. The cleanup crew consisted of Wendy, John H, Gary, Jean Wunder, Sue Sierke, and Al Boucher. Bob Catzen helped out as needed.



Instructor Ed Schiller is assisted back into his kayak by student Demetrius Wren. Photo/Catriona Miller.

Being a risky task, the flare demonstration included instructions to Moulton and Reggie not to drink alcohol in advance and not to burn down the nuclear power plant. Cat commented, though, that she momentarily panicked when someone asked if Moulton was high on something. As she observed him drumming on the boathouse deck, she realized that she had neglected to tell each of them not to get high.

Yonson Compton and Stu Cawley led the Sunday morning yoga group gathered on the roof of the boat house. There were so many interesting, informative options on Sunday morning, but so little time. While most of us were breaking down our own camp and hauling our stuff to our cars, the large team of volunteers was busy cleaning coffee pots and grills, carrying stuff up the hill, and removing signs and surveyor's tape, too. ♡



A wet exits class caps off their Saturday morning together by practicing their paddling. Photo/Catriona Miller

Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Summary
Sat, June 3	CPA Gear Day & Fall Out of Your Boat Day	9:00 - 4:00 all skill levels, skills practice and CPA logo gear sales
Sun, June 4	George Washington Distillery & Grist Mill Paddle	10:30, Adv Beg, launch on MD side, past Mt Vernon to distillery and lunch site
Mon, June 5	Lower Chester River	10:00, Adv Beg, from Kent Island to Queenstown & Tilghman Creeks. Queen Anne's County launch permit required
June 6, 7, 8	piracies	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Sat, June 10	KIPP 2017 #3	8:00, third meeting to help improve skills and build endurance for the challenge paddle in September.
Sun, June 11	non-CPA event: Chesapeake Bay Swim & kayak support	7:00, Sandy Point Park, or 8:15, Eastern Shore side of bridge
Mon, June 12	Upper reaches of Choptank River	10:00, Adv Beg & Beg who can paddle 10 mi, launch from Greensboro, explore upper river on high tide
Sat, June 17 - Sun, 18	Westmoreland Kayak camper from Colton Pt, MD	8:00 6/17 - 5:00 6/18, Int, cross Potomac to new paddle-in site
June 13, 14, 15	piracies	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Mon, June 19	Patuxent into Hunting Creek	10:00, Adv Beg
June 20, 21, 22	Pirates of Algonkian, Baltimore, Sugarloaf	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Sat, June 24	Eastern Neck Spring Paddle	9:00, Adv Beg, around the island 10-12 mi
Sun, June 25	Magothy River to Severn River Paddle	8:00, Int, 16 mi with 4 mi shuttle for vehicles
June 27, 28, 29	piracies	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Fri, 6/30 - Tues, 7/4	Fourth of July Pocomoke Car Camper	6/30 3:00 - 7/4 3:00 Adv Beg, paddling area waterways, camping nr Snow Hill, MD
Sat, July 8 - Sun, 9	Full Moon Overnight Paddle & Breakfast	7/8 8:00 pm - 7/9 8:00 am, Int, paddling distance likely 20+ mi, sunset to sunrise
Sat, July 15	non-CPA event: Manhattan Circumnavigation	6:00 am (raindate Sun, 7/16), launch either Dyckman St Beach, Hudson River in northern Manhattan or Fort Lee, NJ
Sat, July 15	KIPP 2017 #4	8:00, fourth meeting to help improve skills and build endurance for the challenge paddle in September.
Sun, July 16	Selby's Landing to Mattaponi Creek	10:00, all levels, easy nature paddle, 10 mi total
Wed, July 19	Pirates of Arundell @ Galesville Wharf, Potomac	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Thurs, July 20	Pirates of the North, Patuxent,	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Tues, July 25	Pirates of Algonkian, Baltimore, Sugarloaf	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Wed, July 26	Pirates of Arundell @ Edgewater, Potomac	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Thurs, July 27	Pirates of the North, Patuxent,	check CPA calendar for start times and roving launch sites
Sat July 29	Thomas Point Lighthouse & South River	9:00 Adv Beg, classic Chesapeake Bay trip, about 10 mi
Sat, July 29	Patuxent after Dark	8:00 pm - 11:45 Adv Beg, short night paddle to Greenwell SP

For the most up-to-date listings, visit the [CPA Meetup Calendar](#).

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1. Inform the trip leader and your friends, without delay, that you aren't feeling well and immediately "buddy up." A rafted tow may be appropriate in order to reach shore safely.
2. Rehydrate immediately with a cool water/electrolyte solution, if available; otherwise, drink plain water. A quart of water over 30 minutes is recommended.
3. Have someone help cool your body by using a sponge or kerchief to moisten exposed skin or simply "wallow" a bit by the shore if symptoms of dizziness are not present.
4. Get out of the sun and into shade, if possible. Use a tarp to make a shelter, if necessary.
5. If symptoms worsen, get help. Left untreated, heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke! Even when treated appropriately, do not expect the paddler to recover immediately. It can take one or more full days for him or her to feel normal, again.



seizures. A core temperature exceeding 104 degrees F is one of the defining symptoms.

Call 911 or use Channel 16 on your marine radio to call for assistance from the Coast Guard should it appear that any of your paddling

buddies is suffering from heat stroke. While you are waiting for help, move the person affected into the shade as soon as possible. WebMD suggests removing any unnecessary clothing and having the person lie on his or her side to expose as much of the body to cooling as possible. Cool the person's body any way you can, e.g. a sponge bath with water combined with fanning. Assist the person to rehydrate. He or she may have trouble swallowing, even though conscious, so be aware of the possibility of choking. Evacuate as soon as possible!

Full disclosure: I am not a doctor, nor do I play one on TV. The technical information for this article was found in my Center for Wilderness Safety, Wilderness First Aid: A Pocket Field Guide, as well as on the website: www.webmd.com. ♦

Clarification

The CPA members pictured in the May 2017 *Chesapeake Paddler* conducting a rescue exercise at Cape Henlopen State Park, Delaware, were doing so during a training event that was part of the Unconscious Competence series run by Cross Currents Sea Kayaking. — *The Editors*.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a life-threatening medical emergency. Symptoms can include red, hot, dry skin (sweating has now stopped), headache, a rapid pulse, dizziness, disorientation, vomiting, fatigue, fainting, and

The Chesapeake Paddler

Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 341

Greenbelt, MD 20768-0341

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