

RHABDOMYOLYSIS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

RHABDOMYOLYSIS (or just Rhabdo) is a condition characterized by the rapid breakdown of skeletal muscle cells and subsequent release of intracellular muscle contents into the body. Rhabdomyolysis is a **significant threat** to military members during physical exertions, particularly under conditions of heat stress.

CAN BE CAUSED BY extreme exertion, especially during hot weather. High-intensity, protracted, or repetitive physical activity, like pull-up challenges, CrossFit workouts, and intense weightlifting carry significant risk; especially for an untrained athlete. However, this can happen in elite athletes too and it can be more dangerous if there is more muscle mass to break down.

SYMPTOMS INCLUDE severe muscle pain in the shoulders, thighs, or lower back; muscle weakness or trouble moving arms and legs; muscle cramping; and dark red or brown urine or decreased urination. These symptoms may be accompanied by abdominal pain, vomiting, fever, rapid heart rate, confusion, and lack of consciousness.

PREVENTION MEASURES include preconditioning and adhering to work/rest and hydration schedules. Maintaining a healthy weight and restricting strenuous exercise sessions to the cool morning hours will also reduce the risk of rhabdomyolysis.



545

The number of active
duty service
members diagnosed
with exertional
rhabdomyolysis in
2018.

KIDNEY FAILURE

is the
most dangerous
complication

Contact your unit
medical representative
for more information

