

Quick Guide: Protecting Yourself from Heat Stress



Heat stress, from exertion or hot environments, places workers at risk for illnesses such as heat stroke, heat exhaustion, or heat cramps.

Heat Stroke

A condition that occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature, and can cause death or permanent disability.

Symptoms: High body temperature, confusion, loss of coordination, hot dry skin or profuse sweating, throbbing headache, seizures or coma

First Aid: Request immediate medical assistance, move the person to a cool shaded area, remove excess clothing and apply cool water to their body.

Heat Exhaustion

The body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through sweating.

Symptoms: Rapid heart beat, heavy sweating, extreme weakness or fatigue, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, irritability, fast shallow breathing, slightly elevated body temperature

First Aid: Rest in a cool area, drink plenty of water or other cool beverages, take a cool shower or bath. Seek medical assistance if necessary.

Heat Cramps

Affect people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. Sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture levels.

Symptoms: Muscle cramps, pain, or spasms in the abdomen, arms or legs

First Aid: Stop all activity, and sit in a cool place. Drink clear juice or a sports beverage, or drink water with food. Avoid salt tablets. Do not return to strenuous work for a few hours after the cramps subside. Seek medical attention if you have the following: heart problems, are on a low-sodium diet, or if the cramps do not subside within one hour.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, CDC

Quick Guide: Protecting Yourself from Heat Stress Continued



Protect Yourself

Avoid heavy exertion, extreme heat, sun exposure, and high humidity when possible. When those cannot be avoided, take the following preventative steps:

- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers for signs or symptoms of heat illnesses.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing such as cotton.
- Avoid non-breathable synthetic clothing.
- Gradually build up to heavy work.
- Schedule heavy work during the coolest parts of day.
- Take more breaks when doing heavier work, and in high heat and humidity. Take breaks in the shade or a cool area.
- Drink water frequently. Drink enough water that you never become thirsty.
- Be aware that protective clothing or personal protective equipment may increase the risk of heat-related illnesses.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, CDC