

Heat Stress

When your body is unable to cool itself by sweating, several heat-induced illnesses such as heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke can occur, even resulting in death.

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating just isn't enough. Your body temperature can rise to dangerous levels and you can develop heat illness. Most heat illnesses occur from staying out in the heat too long or exercising too much for your age and physical condition. Older adults, young children and those who are sick or overweight are most at risk. You can help your body by drinking fluids, replenishing salt and minerals and limiting time in the heat.

Heat-Related Illnesses

- Heat exhaustion - an illness that can precede heatstroke; symptoms include heavy sweating, rapid breathing and a fast, weak pulse
- Heatstroke - a life-threatening illness in which body temperature may rise above 106° F in minutes; symptoms include dry skin, dizziness and a rapid, strong pulse
- Heat cramps - muscle pains or spasms that happen during heavy exercise
- Heat rash - skin irritation from excessive sweating

Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

- Headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting
- Weakness and moist skin
- Mood changes such as irritability or confusion
- Upset stomach or vomiting

Symptoms of Heat Stroke

- Dry, hot skin with no sweating
- Mental confusion or loss of consciousness
- Seizures or convulsions

Preventing Heat Stress

- Know the signs and/or symptoms of heat-related illnesses
- Monitor yourself and co-workers
- For heavy work in hot areas, take turns with co-workers so some can rest
- Block out direct sun or other heat sources
- Use cooling fans or air conditioning
- Rest in a cool, shady spot
- Drink lots of water; about one cup every 15 minutes
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks and heavy meals
- If you work in protective clothing you will need more rest breaks

What to Do for Heat-Related Illness

- Call 911 immediately
- Move to a cool, shaded area
- Loosen or remove heavy clothing
- Provide cool drinking water
- Fan and mist the individual with water

For more information, visit or call these agencies:

Center to Protect Workers' Rights

www.cpwr.com
301-578-8500

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

www.cdc.gov/niosh
800-35-NIOSH

Occupational Safety & Health Administration

www.osha.gov
800-321-OSHA