



Heat Stress

Exposure to extreme heat can lead to dangerous conditions, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It can also contribute to cardiovascular problems and incidents due to loss of focus and excessive fatigue. By understanding the risks and implementing preventive measures, we can provide a safe and healthy working environment. Let us explore heat-related illnesses and learn how to prevent them.

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

There are three main heat-related illnesses we need to be aware of.

- 1. Heat Cramps:** Heat cramps are painful, brief muscle cramps that can occur during or after working in a hot environment. Muscles may spasm or jerk involuntarily. If you experience heat cramps, it is a sign that your body needs attention and cooling.
- 2. Heat Exhaustion:** Heat exhaustion can manifest in two forms: water depletion and salt depletion. Signs of water depletion include excessive thirst, weakness, headache, and loss of consciousness. Signs of salt depletion include nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps, and dizziness. Heat exhaustion requires immediate attention and should not be ignored.
- 3. Heat Stroke:** Heat stroke is the most severe heat-related illness and can be life-threatening. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures, often in combination with dehydration, can cause the body's temperature control system to fail. Heat stroke can result in damage to the brain and other internal organs. Recognizing the symptoms of heat stroke is crucial, and immediate medical attention is needed to prevent irreversible injuries or death.

MEDICAL RESPONSE

If you or a co-worker displays symptoms of a heat related illness, it is important to take action promptly. For individuals showing signs of heat exhaustion, stop work immediately and move to a shaded area. Provide water or electrolyte-replacing sports drinks. Rest for the remainder of the day and avoid returning to work until symptoms subside.

If someone displays symptoms of heat stroke, call 911 immediately. Move the person to a shaded area or indoors. Do not use ice-cold water, as it may cause shock. Instead, use cool water to lower the body temperature. Remove unnecessary clothing and fan the person until medical help arrives.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES TO PREVENT HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

To protect ourselves and our colleagues from heat-related illnesses, let us follow these safe work practices.

Acclimatization: Allow for acclimatization to a hot environment before engaging in strenuous work. It takes approximately two weeks for the body to adjust to high temperatures.

Hydration: Drink plenty of water, especially during intense physical activities in hot environments. Remember that the average person sweats between 27 and 47 ounces per hour during labor, so replenishing fluids is essential.

Rest and Shade: Take frequent breaks in shaded areas or indoors where there is air conditioning. Resting and seeking cooler environments can help prevent heat-related illnesses.

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SAFETY: FIRST. LAST. ALWAYS!

Avoid Caffeine and Alcohol: Both caffeine and alcohol can contribute to dehydration. It is best to avoid these substances, especially when working in hot conditions.

Monitor Yourself and Co-Workers: Stay vigilant for signs and symptoms of heat illness in yourself and your colleagues. Promptly address any concerns and encourage open communication.

Dress Appropriately: Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing that allows for airflow and facilitates the evaporation of sweat. Dress in layers so that clothing can be adjusted as the temperature rises.

Sun Protection: Use sunscreen and sunblock when working outdoors to protect your skin from harmful UV rays. Wear a hat and light clothing to provide additional protection.

Eye Protection: Wear light-filtering eye protection to shield your eyes.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Wear additional suitable PPE as required by the job.

SUMMARY

Take heat stress seriously. Know the signs and symptoms of heat stress. Have a plan to get the proper medical attention for any individual displaying symptoms of heat stress. Especially when dealing with heat stroke, it may mean the difference between life and death.

Heat - Overview: Working in Outdoor and Indoor Heat Environments | Occupational Safety and Health Administration. www.osha.gov/heat-exposure.



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Exceptional Service: Align goals. Add value. Develop lasting relationships.

Commitment to Excellence: Take ownership. Constantly improve.

Focus on Team: Listen. Collaborate. Communicate. Execute.

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