

Prevent Heat Illness Before It Can Start!

The good news is that we can prevent heat related illness by following these steps:

- Ensure that cool drinking water is available and easily accessible
- Drink water periodically – if you're waiting until you're thirsty, you're already at risk of heat related illness
- Take breaks as often as needed to stay cool
- Set up fans or air conditioners in your work and/or break area if possible
- Set up shaded work areas if possible
- Schedule work to occur during cooler parts of the day
- Get acclimatized, or build up a tolerance, to hot weather before you start working heavily
- Work with a buddy so that you can keep an eye on each other for signs of heat related illness
- Make sure you know the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency!



Heat Related Illnesses

Heat Stroke and Heat Exhaustion

Spring has officially sprung, and the hot days of summer won't be far behind. While summer is a time of picnics and family gatherings, it's also a time of danger due to heat-related illnesses like heat exhaustion, and most deadly of all, heat stroke.

Heat illness occurs when your body can't maintain its normal temperature, which for most of us, is around 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. If something causes our body temperature to rise, it will respond by producing sweat and using other mechanisms to help cool us back off. If for some reason these cooling mechanisms don't work, we're in danger of heat illness.

The most serious heat related illness is heat stroke. It occurs when your temperature regulating system fails and your body temperature rises to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a medical emergency, and you need both immediate medical attention and immediate cooling. Heat stroke comes in two forms, which have slightly different symptoms:

Classic heat stroke occurs when a person is exposed to high temperatures and humidity and becomes dehydrated. This form of heat stroke is most common in the elderly, small children, and seriously ill, and may take hours to develop. Signs of classic heat stroke include hot, dry skin, headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, confusion, seizures, and loss of consciousness.

Exertional heat stroke occurs when a person exercising or working in a hot and humid environment raises their temperature faster than their body can cool it back down.

This form of heat stroke is common with anyone who exercises or is physically active in hot weather. Symptoms included profuse sweating, headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, confusion, seizures, and loss of consciousness. This form of heat stroke can affect both the young and the physically fit and can strike rapidly.

If you believe a person is experiencing either form of heat stroke, call 911 immediately. Cool the person down as quickly as possible. Move them to a cooler area, remove outer clothing, use things like cold compresses, water, fans, ice baths, and give them cool water to drink if they are conscious and able. Stay with the person until medical help arrives

A more commonly experienced form of heat illness is heat exhaustion. Signs and symptoms are very similar to heat stroke, but just a little bit milder. If left untreated, heat exhaustion can rapidly progress to heat stroke.

If the person is showing signs of dizziness, weakness, has an unsteady gait, and/or has symptoms like nausea, muscle cramps, headaches, and fatigue, they are most likely experiencing heat exhaustion and need to get cooled down and rehydrated immediately.

Move the person to a cooler location, give them water to drink, cool them with compresses, ice packs, water and/or fans. Take the person for medical evaluation and don't leave them alone!