

Heat Related Illness & Injury Overview

Handout

When your body is unable to cool itself through sweating, serious heat illnesses may occur. The most severe heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If actions are not taken to treat heat exhaustion, the illness could progress to heat stroke and you could possibly die.

Heat exhaustion

What happens to your body?

- Headaches
- Dizziness/lightheadedness
- Weakness
- Mood changes (irritable, or confused or can't think straight)
- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Vomiting/throwing up
- Decreased and dark colored urine
- Fainting/passing out; pale clammy skin

Heat stroke—A medical emergency

What happens to your body?

- Dry pale skin (no sweating)
- Hot red skin (looks like a sunburn)
- Mood changes (irritable, confused or not making any sense)
- Seizures/fits
- Collapse/passed out (will not respond)

Things you can do to prevent difficulties from heat related illnesses and injuries:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of heat-induced illnesses and what you can do to help yourself or a fellow employee.
- Use the buddy system (work in pairs) when working in hot conditions.
- Drink plenty of cool water (one small cup every 15-20 minutes).
- Wear light, loose-fitting, breathable (like cotton) clothing.
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments.
- Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages (these beverages make your body lose water and increase the risk for heat illnesses).
- Slowly build up tolerance to the heat and your work activity (usually takes about two weeks).
- Do your heaviest work in the coolest part of the day.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool shaded areas. This allows your body to cool down.



You are at increased risk when you:

- Take certain medications. Check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacy and ask if any medicines you are taking affect you
- While working in hot environments.
- Have had a heat-induced illness in the past.
- Wear some personal protective equipment such as respirators or protective suits.

