

Heat Related Illness Prevention



When the body heats up faster than it can cool itself, mild to severe illnesses may develop. It's important to recognize the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and understand how to prevent, control and respond to their effects.

Air temperature, humidity and clothing can increase the risk of developing heat-related illnesses. So can age, sex, weight, physical fitness, nutrition, alcohol or drug use, or pre-existing diseases like diabetes. How can you prevent or control heat-related illnesses?

- Drink water - Drink small amounts of water frequently, about a cup every 15-20 minutes. (Alcohol increases the loss of body fluids.)
- Limit exposure time and/or temperature - Try to schedule hot jobs for cooler times of the day or cooler seasons of the year. Take rest breaks in cool areas. Add more workers to reduce workload or reduce the workday.
- Acclimatization - Gradually adapting to heat will reduce the severity of heat stress.
- Engineering controls - Mechanize heavy jobs or increase air movement with fans or coolers.
- Wearing loose, lightweight clothing - Clothing can affect heat buildup.

Salt tablets should not be used - Taking salt tablets can raise blood pressure, cause stomach ulcers, and seriously affect workers with heart disease.

Mild Vs Moderate Symptoms

Someone with a **mild** reaction to heat may have:

- A rash called "prickly heat" or painful muscle spasms, called heat cramps, during or after activity.
- Fatigue or dizziness.
- You may notice a change in physical or mental performance and an increase in accidents.

A person with a **moderate** reaction or heat exhaustion will have some or all of the following symptoms:

- Excessive sweating
- Cold, moist, pale or flushed skin
- Thirst
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Headache, nausea, lack of appetite
- Rapid weak pulse, or giddiness and if not properly treated, the victim may collapse.

Anyone with mild or moderate symptoms should be moved to a cool, shaded place with circulating air. They should lie down and, if conscious, be given small sips of cool water at frequent intervals. If symptoms continue, a doctor should be called.

In severe cases of heat illness, a heat stroke may result.

- The victim's face is flushed red and their skin is hot and dry with no sweating.
- They develop a severe headache with deep, rapid breathing.
- They have a very high fever and may become delirious.
- They may become unconscious, have convulsions, or lapse into a coma.

This condition is fatal unless emergency medical treatment is obtained. Immediately call for medical help. In the meantime, get them out of the hot environment. Loosen clothing and pour water over the entire body. Get air circulating around the body.

Recognizing the warning signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and using preventive and control measures can reduce the frequency and severity of heat illness while increasing worker productivity.