

Heat stress

Introduction:

Heat exhaustion can occur when you are in hot environments and fail to take in enough fluids, salts or both. And even worse, this can lead to a life threatening condition called heat stroke. Heat stroke happens when the body fails to regulate its core temperature. At this point, the body stops cooling itself through perspiration and can't get rid of excess heat. The end result can be death if the body temperature isn't lowered!

Hazards:

Symptoms of heat stress include:

- **Heat Cramps**—painful muscle spasms. Tired muscles are most susceptible to cramping. Heat cramps are caused when workers drink large quantities of water but fail to take in enough salt to replace the salt their body lost through sweating.
- **Heat Exhaustion**—Symptoms include moist, clammy skin, profuse sweating, extreme weakness or fatigue, dry mouth, dizziness, fast pulse, rapid breathing, muscle cramps and nausea.
- **Heat or Sun Stroke**—Symptoms are a very high body temperature (104 degrees F or higher); lack of sweat; mental confusion, delirium, or hallucinations; deep breathing and rapid pulse; hot, dry, red or mottled skin; and

dilated pupils. Seek medical help immediately and keep the person cool with water until help arrives.

Safe procedures:

- Adjust yourself to the heat through short exposure periods followed by longer exposure until your body is accustomed to the heat. It may take 5-7 days of hot weather exposure before the body undergoes changes that make heat more bearable.
- Drink lots of liquids—Replenish the fluid that your body is losing through sweating. Not only water, but critical electrolytes such as sodium, potassium and calcium are lost through sweating, so consider using electrolyte drinks (Sport Drinks) to combat heat-related disorders.
- Do not ignore possible symptoms of heat stress. If you feel very hot, dizzy, nauseous or if your muscles cramp, stop and cool off!

In conclusion:

Heat Stress Disorders are serious. If an employee appears to be suffering from heat stress disorder, remove him or her from the heat and provide a cool, shaded place to rest. If the employee is disoriented or non-responsive, call for medical attention immediately.