

# HEAT STRESS

Workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments may be at risk of heat stress. Exposure to extreme heat can result in occupational illnesses such as heat cramps, heat syncope, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Extreme heat can increase the risk of injuries in workers as it may result in sweaty palms, fogged-up safety glasses, and dizziness. The following information will help you understand what heat stress is, how it affects your health and safety and how it can be prevented.

## Types of Heat Stress

Type of Heat Stress	Signs/Symptoms	First Aid
Heat Rash – is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather.	Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. It is more likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts and in elbow creases.	Try to work during a cooler, less humid time of day when possible. Keep the affected area dry. Dusting powder may be used to increase comfort.
Heat Cramps – usually affect workers who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture levels. Low salt levels in the muscles cause painful cramps. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion	Muscle pain or spasms in the abdomen, arms or legs.	Stop all activity, and sit in a cool place. Drink clear juice or a sports beverage. Do not return to strenuous work for a few hours after the cramps subside because further exertion may lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Seek medical attention when any of the following apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The worker has heart problems</li><li>• The worker is on a low-sodium diet</li><li>• The cramps do not subside within one hour</li></ul>
Heat Syncope – is a fainting (syncope) episode or dizziness that occurs with prolonged standing or sudden rising from a sitting or lying position.	Symptoms may include: Light-headedness; Dizziness and Fainting.	Sit or lie down in a cool place when they begin to feel symptoms. Slowly drink water, clear juice or a sports beverage.
Heat Exhaustion – is the body's response to an excessive loss of the water and salt, usually through excessive sweating.	Symptoms may include: heavy sweating; normal or elevated core body temperature (97 – 104°F); dizziness; confusion; nausea; clammy moist skin; pale or flushed complexion; muscle cramps and fast and shallow breathing.	Have the affected person rest in a cool, shaded or air-conditioned area. Have them drink plenty of water or other cool, nonalcoholic beverages. Have them take a cool shower, bath or sponge bath.
Heat Stroke – is the most serious heat stress illness. It occurs when the body becomes unable to control its core body temperature. The body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails and the body is unable to cool down.	Symptoms may include: hot, dry skin or profuse sweating; high core body temperature greater than 104°F; hallucinations; chills; throbbing headache; confusion; dizziness and slurred speech	Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call 911 and notify their supervisor/manager</li><li>• Move the sick worker to a cool, shaded area</li><li>• Cool the worker using one of following methods: soak their clothes with water; spray, sponge or shower them with water; fan them.</li></ul>

## Heat Stress Prevention

Not being used to working in heat is a big problem. Most of the people who die from heat stroke are in their first few days of work during a heat wave. If you haven't worked in a hot environment for a week or more, your body needs time to adjust. You need to take more breaks and not do too much strenuous work during your first weeks on the job.

Some health conditions may also put you at a greater risk of heat stress. These include diabetes, kidney and heart problems, pregnancy and being overweight. If you have these, it is always good to talk to your doctor about the work you do and ask whether there are any special precautions you need to take.

**Severe heat illnesses can be prevented when you: drink water often, even if you aren't thirsty; rest in a cool, shaded area; and report heat symptoms early.**