

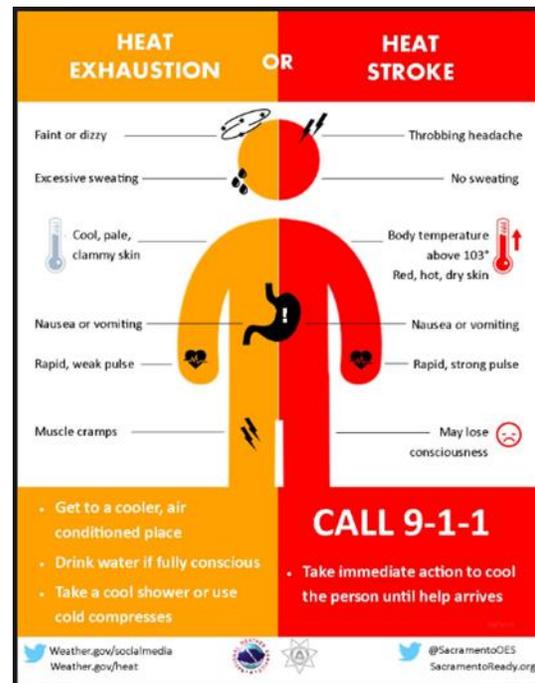
Preventing Staff Heat Illnesses

July, 2019

Annually approximately 2,600 individuals suffered from heat illness and 18 die from heat stroke and related causes on the job. Heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable.

Here is some information on heat-related illnesses:

- 1) There are three stages of progressive heat stress; muscle cramps, heat exhaustion (dizzy, weak, and/or nausea) and heat stroke (headache, hot & dry skin, not sweating, passing out).
- 2) Humidity brings on heat illness more quickly as it reduces the rate of sweat evaporation keeping body heat on the skin.
- 3) It takes the human body 7-10 days to adapt to hot weather.
- 4) When exerting yourself outside drink 10 ounces of water every 10-20 minutes, even if you are not thirsty!
- 5) Rest in the shade, or better yet, inside in air conditioning to cool down when needed.
- 6) Always wear a hat and breathable light colored clothing.
- 7) Learn the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency.
- 8) Most importantly, keep an eye on fellow workers and look for the signs listed above.
- 9) Go easy on your first days of work in the heat so you can adapt.



There are several myths regarding heat-related illnesses:

Myth - You should take salt tablets during hot weather to replenish electrolytes lost during sweating.

Reality - Never use salt tablets unless specifically instructed by your doctor. Electrolytes are normally restored by eating meals and snacks. Drink plenty of water with meals and snacks. Ingesting salt may cause nausea and vomiting that can increase dehydration.

Myth - Acclimatization will protect you during a heat wave. Acclimatization occurs when a person is exposed to extreme environmental conditions over a 7-10-day period.

Reality - During heat waves air temperatures rise and staff may not be able to immediately acclimatize to the new, hotter temperatures. During heat waves, provide staff with more breaks and consider rescheduling harder jobs to when it is cooler.

Myth - The medications you take and your overall health condition do not affect your ability to work safely in the heat.

Reality - Medications and overall health can affect how your body handles hot weather and physical exertion. Health issues such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and even the flu may put you at greater risk. Your medications may affect your ability to cool down or may cause the body to heat up more quickly. Medications of note included diuretics, antihypertensives, and anticholinergics. If taking any of these consult your physicians about any additional risk when working in hot environments.

Risk assessment applications:

The mobile phone app “OSHA NIOSH Heat Safety Tool” is available on Google Play for Android and the App store for iPhones. This useful tool uses your local temperature and humidity to determine the heat index at your location and provides recommendations for the various heat index-associated risk levels (cramps, exhaustion, stroke). You can even plug in the forecasted temperature (and humidity) to assess the risk to staff before sending them out to work. Encourage staff to download the app as well.

So, you are outside working and a co-worker starts experiencing signs of a heat-related illness: what do you do?

Heat Cramps

- 1) Stop all activity and sit in a cool place, preferably in air conditioning.
- 2) Drink lots of clear juice, sports beverages and/or drink water.
- 3) Avoid salt tablets.
- 4) Don't return to strenuous work for a few hours after cramping stops.
- 5) If cramping does not subside within an hour seek medical attention if you have the heart problems or if you are on a low-sodium diet.

Heat Exhaustion

- 1) Rest in a cool area.
- 2) Drink plenty of water or other cool beverages.
- 3) Take a cool shower or bath to lower your body temperature.

Heat Stroke

- 1) Seek immediate medical attention! Call 911
- 2) Move the staff member to a cool, shaded area.
- 3) Take off excess clothing and apply cool water to their body.

In conclusion:

Download the heat index app

Speak up if you think you're experiencing heat-related issues or if you see a fellow staff member struggling. Acclimatizing to summer work, wearing the right clothing, bringing water to the worksite and being aware of the temperature/humidity heat index and knowing what to do in an emergency are the keys to safe summertime work.