



When the body is unable to cool itself by sweating, several heat-induced illnesses such as heat stress or heat exhaustion and the more severe heat stroke can occur, and can result in death.

Factors Leading to Heat Stress

High temperature and humidity; direct sun or heat; limited air movement; physical exertion; poor physical condition; some medicines; and inadequate tolerance for hot workplaces.

Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

- Headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting
- Weakness and moist skin
- Mood changes such as irritability or confusion
- Upset stomach or vomiting

Symptoms of Heat Stroke

- Dry, hot skin with no sweating
- Mental confusion or losing consciousness
- Seizures or convulsions

Preventing Heat Stress

- Know signs/symptoms of heat-related illness; monitor yourself and coworkers
- Block out direct sun or other heat sources
- Use cooling fans/air-conditioning; rest regularly
- Drink lots of water; about 1 cup every 15 minutes
- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, or heavy meals

Plan Ahead When You Will Be Working in a Hot Environment

1. **Acclimatization:** Get used to hot working environments gradually. US Army studies indicate 10 days necessary for full adjustment. Work/rest cycles. Slowed work pace.
2. **Liquid Intake:** Drink lots of cool (not ice cold) water, along with salted beverages ("sport beverages"--Gatorade, Powerade, etc.). In some cases, thirst is not an accurate indication of your body's need for liquids. Avoid alcoholic beverages. (Consult with a physician if you're on a restricted salt or low-sodium diet.)
3. **Movement:** Try NOT to stand immobile in one spot for extended periods. Wide-open surface capillaries (blood vessels) can pool blood in legs, caus-

CONTROLLING HEAT STRESS

ing temporary low blood pressure and black-outs. Movement helps prevent blood pooling.

4. **Clothes Change:** Especially in very humid environments, sweat doesn't evaporate readily, soaks clothes, and can result in prickly heat, or heat rashes. Bathe daily, and consider a complete change of clothes at mid-day (lunch break), during especially humid times.
5. **Adjust Work/Rest Cycles:** The hotter and more humid the environment, rest breaks should be taken more frequently, and for longer periods of time.
6. **Provide Cooling:** During rest breaks and meal breaks, cool areas should be provided. Frigid air conditioning should be avoided, if possible. Fans in the work area help move air, and evaporate sweat. Refuges from heat and humidity should be provided at the workplace, so workers who are feeling ill effects from heat can recuperate.
7. **If You Feel Bad, Stop Working:** Continuing to work with a developing heat disorder can lead to a serious medical emergency. Stop working and notify your supervisor if you feel nauseated, light-headed, dizzy, excessively weak, or have similar symptoms. Seek a cool place to lie down and rest.