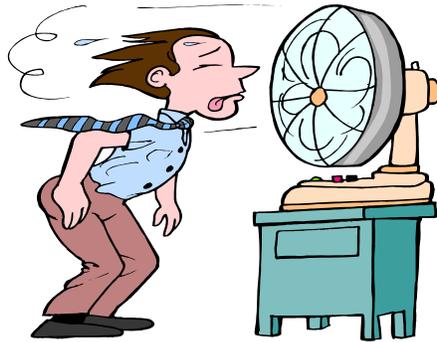


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Keep Your Cool In Hot Weather



As the summer approaches, it's time to think about an added safety hazard in the workplace. High temperatures and humidity can cause heat illness. While most people adjust to hot weather when given enough time, this illness can range from mild to deadly. The human body has many ways of coping with excessive heat and maintaining the normal body temperature. For instance, when sweat evaporates into the air, the body is cooled.

Illness occurs when too much heat overloads the coping mechanisms. The balance of water and minerals in the body's core temperature may rise to dangerous levels in the body and may be out of kilter. Sweating may be halted. The body's core temperature may rise to dangerous levels. If this process continues unattended, brain damage and death can occur.

Here are some ways to prevent heat illness:

- Get accustomed to the heat gradually. If possible, take it easy for a few days until the body can adjust to hot weather.
- Work at a steady pace, avoiding over-exertion.
- Be sure to take your schedule breaks to cool off and rest.
- Wear light, layered clothing to allow for maximum ventilation. Cotton is generally cooler than synthetic fabrics. Wear a hat and a sunscreen in the sun.
- Drink fluids often. Dehydration is a major contributor to heat illness. Preferred beverages are cool water and special drinks that replace minerals as well as fluids

- Eat cool, light meals that are nutritious. Save the hot, heavy meals until you are off-shift.
- Lightly salting foods may help maintain the balance of minerals in the body, replacing salt lost through sweating. However, consult a doctor if you must restrict salt intake for any reason such as heart problems or high blood pressure. Salt tablets are not recommended.
- In some hot work environments. Cooled suits are used to keep the body temperature at a safe level. Clothing may be cooled by ice, water or air. Reflective clothing is also available to keep the heat off the skin.

Here are the three stages of heat illness, and their symptoms:

- **Heat cramps.** This condition occurs when the body has lost too much mineral content through sweating. The cramps typically occur in the legs or abdomen, often after the person has left work. For treatment, drink fluids and take it easy.
- **Heat exhaustion.** This is a more serious condition. The victim may display either a pale or flushed look, as well as weakness, sweating and clammy skin, a headache, dizziness or nausea. If heat exhaustion occurs, call your supervisor right away. Cool off the person by fanning, and applying cool compresses. Have the person drink fluids slowly. The victim should lie down with the feet elevated slightly.
- **Heat stroke.** This is the most serious of heat illness, and it can quickly lead to death. Signs are chills, confusion, dry, hot, flushed skin and a rapid pulse. Call for a doctor immediately. Cool the person down as quickly as possible, using a water hose, ice packs, or placing the person in a cool bath. Apply rescue breathing or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (**CPR**) if necessary. Do not give fluids by mouth to a person it can cause the victim to choke to death.

Safety Tip: It is important to prevent heat illness and to be alert to its symptoms. Even the early stages of heat illness should be taken seriously, because they are the warning signs of a dangerous condition that can lead to death.



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