



Keeping your cool in the summer heat

Each year, thousands of employees experience heat illnesses while working in hot conditions. In dozens of cases, the results are fatal. As temperatures begin to rise, it's important to understand this hazard and how to protect yourself.

Heat illnesses can occur both indoors and outdoors so it's important to recognize when you might be at risk. There are several environmental risk factors including temperature, humidity and air circulation. There are also individual risk factors such as workload, hydration, personal health, clothing and recent exposure to heat.

Prevention

Employees can help protect themselves from heat illnesses by preparing to work in hot conditions. The [OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool App](#) can help identify the heat index and determine appropriate controls. You should also follow these general tips:

- If you have any health conditions, talk to your doctor about necessary precautions.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol before and during work.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.
- If you'll be working in the sun, apply sunscreen before work and reapply according to the directions on the package.
- Ensure that cool water is available at the work location.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Take breaks throughout the day to rest and hydrate in a cool, shady location.

Symptoms

There are several types of heat illnesses, with the most serious being heat stroke. Less severe types include heat rash, heat cramps and heat exhaustion. Recognizing the early symptoms of less severe heat illnesses and getting treatment quickly can help reduce the risk of developing a more serious illness. Be aware of these symptoms while working:

- Muscle cramps
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Irritability
- Confusion
- Extreme thirst
- Nausea
- Vomiting

First-aid

If you notice symptoms of a heat illness in yourself or one of your coworkers, intervene immediately. Move to a cooler, shady location and slowly drink water or a sports drink that can help replace your electrolytes. Cool down your body temperature by removing unnecessary clothing like shoes and socks and utilizing cold compresses.

If symptoms improve, you should go home to recover and rest for the day. If symptoms do not improve, seek medical attention. If you suspect heat stroke, call 911 immediately and attempt to cool the body with cold water and air circulation while waiting for help to arrive.



Discussion questions

1. Heat illnesses can only occur when working outdoors. True or false?
2. What are three environmental risk factors for heat illnesses?
3. What types of drinks should you avoid before and during work?
4. What is the most severe type of heat illness?
5. What are some first-aid interventions to take when you notice symptoms of a heat illness?

Answers

1. False, heat illnesses can occur both indoors and outdoors.
2. Environmental risk factors for heat illnesses include temperature, humidity and air circulation.
3. You should avoid caffeine and alcohol before and during work.
4. The most severe heat illness is heat stroke.
5. If you notice symptoms of a heat illness, move to a cool, shady location, slowly hydrate, remove unnecessary clothing and use cold compresses to help cool the body.

Meeting notes:

Employee comments/concerns: _____

Other safety issues to be addressed on the job/facility: _____

Training record:

Date: _____ Job site/facility: _____
 Trainer: _____ Title: _____

Employee name (print)	/ (signature)	Employee name (print)	/ (signature)
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