

OFFICE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

HEAT STRESS

»»» INTRODUCTION

Heat stress is a physiological condition that occurs when the body is exposed to high temperatures, leading to an inability to maintain its normal temperature balance. Physical effort in warm weather or environmental factors like high humidity and direct sunlight can cause this condition. The body's cooling systems, which include sweating and increased blood flow to the skin, can become overworked and lead to a variety of health problems.

»»» HEAT STRESS

Heat stress occurs when the body's mechanisms for regulating temperature such as sweating and increased blood flow to the skin are insufficient to maintain a stable internal temperature. This can lead to a range of symptoms, from mild discomfort to severe health risks, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke.



»»» CONDITIONS CAUSED BY HEAT STRESS

- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat rash
- Heat stroke

Symptoms of heat stress include:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Dizziness & headache
- Unconsciousness
- Vomiting

»»» HEAT STRESS AWARENESS



Understanding the causes, symptoms, and preventive measures for heat stress and heat exhaustion is essential for safeguarding health, especially during heat waves or strenuous physical activity in hot environments. Awareness and education can empower individuals and communities to recognize the signs early and take appropriate action to mitigate the risks associated with extreme heat.



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ENGINEERING CONTROLS

The best engineering controls to prevent heat-related illness are to make the work environment cooler and to reduce manual workload with mechanization. A variety of engineering controls can reduce workers' exposure to heat:

- Air conditioning
- Cooling fans
- Use of mechanical equipment to reduce manual work (such as conveyors and forklifts.)
- Increase general ventilation



WORK PRACTICES

- Modify work schedules and activities for workers who are new to warm environments.
- Schedule shorter shifts for newly hired and acclimatized workers.
- Require mandatory rest breaks in a cooler environment (such as a shady location or an air-conditioned building).
- Consider scheduling work at a cooler time of day, such as early morning or late afternoon.
- Reduce physical demands as much as possible by planning the work to minimize manual effort (such as delivering material to the point of use so that manual handling is minimized).

POINT TO NOTE

Heat exhaustion is the most common type of heat-related illness. It can occur when you exercise or do manual labor in a hot environment, and your body struggles to cool itself down. When you have heat exhaustion, your internal (core) body temperature may be abnormally high, but it's typically below 104 degrees. You'll likely sweat a lot and have other symptoms like dizziness, nausea and headache.

Heat exhaustion signs and symptoms:

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, clammy skin
- Muscle cramps
- Headache
- Feeling tired or weak

WHAT TO DO

- Lie down in shade or an air-conditioned room.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Keep cool with a cold compress, shower, or bath.