

# Heat Illness

## What is Heat Illness?

Heat illness refers to illnesses that occur from over exposure to the heat/humidity with increased physical activity. The body cannot cool fast enough due to dehydration and/or excessive heat.

There are 4 different levels:

**Heat Rash:** When sweat ducts are clogged and the sweat cannot reach the surface of your skin. Because it is trapped beneath the skin's surface, mild inflammation (rashes) occur.

**Heat Cramps:** Muscle spasms occur due to a loss of a large amount of salt and water from the body sweating.

**Heat Exhaustion:** Your body is overheating and cannot cool itself down fast enough. Symptoms include severe thirst, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting, and even diarrhea.

**Heat Stroke:** The most severe type of heat stress. If you or your co-worker is suffering from heat stroke, call 911 immediately. Heat stroke is a condition caused by your body overheating. Signs and symptoms include skin is hot to the touch, rapid breathing, headache, dizziness, confusion, irritation, unresponsiveness, racing heart rate, alternated mental state, stops sweating, etc.

## Quick Stats

- \* Over **1,000 deaths** occur each year from heat-related illness
- \* More than **90%** of these occur from June to September each year
- \* Employees that work **outside** or in **non-ventilated areas** (for example, in an attic) are at higher risk

## Heat Illness Prevention

Train all employees on how to recognize the signs, symptoms, and prevention of heat illnesses, and how to respond in an emergency.

Drink plenty of water and sport drinks with electrolytes (sodium and potassium).

Avoid caffeinated, alcoholic and/or sugary beverages. Energy drinks like Rockstar, Monster, Red Bull and sodas are loaded with caffeine which is a diuretic, that causes our bodies to lose water and salt. Avoid high-sugar sports drinks. Sugar prevents the body from absorbing water in the blood stream.

Take frequent breaks in cool, shaded areas.

New workers should only have a 20% exposure or less on the first day and increase exposure 20% each additional day. Exposure for those with previous experience, should start at no more than 50% on the first day, 60% on the second day, 80% on the third day, and 100% on day four.

## Treatment and First-Aid

**Heat Rash:** Take frequent breaks in cool, shaded areas, Cool the skin by taking a cool shower/bath, use a calamine lotion or cool compresses to calm itchy, irritated skin.

**Heat Cramps:** Sit or lie down in the shade, drink cool water or sports drinks (replace the electrolytes), stretch, seek medical attention if cramps don't improve.

**Heat Exhaustion:** Move to a cool, shaded area to rest, drink water, apply cool, wet towels or take a cool shower.

**Heat Stroke:** Call 911, find a cool place, immerse in cold water, use cooling blankets/ice. Remove outer clothing, do not force anyone to drink, monitor breathing, **do not leave the victim alone.**