

Not Quite Summer, but the Heat Is On!

Summer will soon be upon us. The summer solstice brings with it rising temperatures and increased humidity. Whether you are outdoors in the heat for work or play, or whether you work indoors in a hot environment, it is important for you to know how to cope with the heat.

Types of Heat Illness

There are a variety of types of heat illness. In order of seriousness, they are:

- **Heat rash**—not dangerous, but definitely uncomfortable. (Showers after work and a sprinkle of talcum are helpful.)
- **Heat stress**—as indicated by such symptoms as extreme thirst, fatigue, dizziness, and even trouble seeing. (Take a cool down break in the shade and drink cool water.)
- **Heat cramps**—painful muscle spasms in arms, legs, or intestines, caused by losing salt as the result of sweating. (Take a cool down break in the shade and drink cool water.)
- **Heat exhaustion**—may cause weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, chills with clammy skin and profuse sweating. (Have the victim rest in a cool spot, and drink cool water unless they are vomiting. If there is no improvement in a short time, seek medical assistance.)
- **Heatstroke**—the most serious, in fact life-threatening, form of heat sickness, in which the cooling action of perspiration stops; the skin may be hot to the touch; and the victim may appear confused and show poor coordination. (Call 911 immediately, move the victim to a cool place at once, then continuously sponge with cold water; apply ice packs until medical assistance arrives.)

Preventing Heat Illness

Fortunately, there is a lot you can do to protect yourself - and your family - from heat illness by follow sensible precautions. For example, you can:

- Limit exposure to the sun as much as possible by scheduling outdoor work during the coolest parts of the day.
- Workers who wear heavy protective clothing or equipment on the job can easily overheat and should take off their protection periodically and take cooling-off breaks.
- Take frequent breaks indoors or in a shaded area that is open to air movement.
- Avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of cool (not cold) water, and drink it frequently and plentifully. Avoid consuming caffeinated or sugary drinks.

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothes, plus a lightweight cotton hat.
- Use sunscreen, preferably with an SPF of 30 or higher, to protect your skin against sunburn—and cancer.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from hazardous UV rays.
- Avoid hot and heavy meals; instead, eat light foods at room temperature and choose small portions of fruits and vegetables (which contain a lot of fluids).



Those at Greater Risk

Some people are likely to be at greater risk than others on especially hot days. For example:

- Those who are pregnant.
- Those who are not in good physical condition.
- Those who are physically ill; especially with diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure.
- Those who are taking certain types of medications.
- Children under 4 years of age/adults aged 65 or older.

When we share the responsibility for safety in the workplace, everyone wins!!