

Heat Illness at Work

Exposure to extreme heat can be deadly. Thousands become sick every year, and many die due to preventable heat-related illnesses. It is necessary to take precautions when working in excessive heat.

WORKERS WHO MAY BE AT RISK

Agricultural workers
Bakery workers
Boiler room workers
Construction workers
Factory workers
Firefighters
Food service workers
Miners

...and anybody else who works outdoors or in hot environments.



Others Risk Factors:

Over 65 years of age
Overweight
Having a heart condition
Taking certain medications

People who suffer from heat stress may either be new or not used to working in the heat. If you have not worked in hot weather for a week or more, your body needs time to adjust.

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

It's important to know the signs of heat-related illness—acting quickly can prevent serious medical conditions and save lives. Workers exposed to extreme heat are also at an increased risk of injuries due to dizziness, sweat, and fogged eye protective gear. If you or a coworker has symptoms of heat-related illness, tell your supervisor right away and seek appropriate medical care.

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| <p>Heat stroke Symptoms may include: confusion; fainting; seizures; very high body temperature; hot, dry skin; or profuse sweating. If you or a coworker are experiencing symptoms, call 911.</p> | <p>Heat exhaustion Symptoms may include: headache; nausea; dizziness; weakness; thirst; and heavy sweating. Seek immediate medical care.</p> | <p>Rhabdomyolysis Heat stress and prolonged physical exertion can cause the breakdown of muscle. Symptoms may include weakness; muscle cramps; irregular heart rhythms; and seizures. Seek immediate medical care.</p> |
| <p>Heat syncope Fainting or dizziness from prolonged standing or sudden rising, and is often due to dehydration.</p> | <p>Heat cramps Occur due to heat and excessive sweating during strenuous activity. Heat cramps could also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.</p> | <p>Heat rash Skin irritation caused by excessive sweating in hot weather. Keep rash dry; ointments and creams should not be used.</p> |

If you experience any of these symptoms, stop activity, get out of the heat, and drink liquids.

PREVENTING HEAT ILLNESS:

- Drink water frequently.
- Rest in the shade or air conditioning to cool down.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing.
- Learn the signs of heat-related illness and what to do in an emergency.
- Keep an eye on fellow workers.
- Acclimate – “easy does it” on your first days of work; be sure to get used to the heat and allow yourself to build up a tolerance.



The information is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider with any questions you have regarding your medical care.



Mount Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health

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