

# Know the signs of heat-related illness

The summer months are the warmest of the year in the U.S. with temperatures often rising above 90 degrees, increasing the risk of heat-related illness (HRI) for workers. To ensure you are prepared from a safety standpoint, take time to review the symptoms of heat illnesses, as well as treatment tips.

HEAT ILLNESS	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT TIPS*
<p><b>Heat exhaustion</b></p>	<p>Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through sweating.</p> <p>Heat exhaustion can cause death or permanent disability if not treated promptly. Take immediate action if the following symptoms are noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy sweating</li> <li>■ Rapid heartbeat</li> <li>■ Blurred vision</li> <li>■ Headaches</li> <li>■ Dizziness</li> <li>■ Confusion</li> <li>■ Irritability</li> <li>■ Moist, cool skin and a weak pulse</li> </ul> <p><i>Additionally, the judgement of a heat exhaustion victim may become clouded and they may insist they are OK.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Medical attention must be sought immediately. Contact a supervisor or call 911.</li> <li>■ Move the victim to a cool, shaded area.</li> <li>■ Cool the victim by soaking with water or sponging with a cool, wet cloth.</li> <li>■ About 8 ounces of water should be consumed by the victim every 15 minutes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Heat stroke</b></p>	<p>Heat stroke is a condition that occurs when the body's internal cooling system has shut down and cannot control its temperature.</p> <p>Heat stroke can kill or permanently disable. Take immediate action if the following symptoms are noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ High body temperature</li> <li>■ Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating</li> <li>■ Confusion</li> <li>■ Loss of coordination</li> <li>■ Throbbing headache</li> <li>■ Seizures or coma</li> </ul> <p><i>Additionally, a heat stroke victim may become delirious or go into convulsions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Medical attention must be sought immediately. Contact a supervisor or call 911.</li> <li>■ Start first aid immediately. Remove outer clothing and cool the victim's entire body by spraying or sponging with a cool, wet cloth.</li> <li>■ Apply ice packs to the neck, groin and armpits if possible. This helps cool the blood, which cools the body.</li> <li>■ Fan air over the victim to help create air flow until help arrives.</li> </ul>

HEAT ILLNESS	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT TIPS*
<b>Heat rash</b>	Perspiration stays on the skin too long and the sweat glands are clogged, which produces a hot, prickly sensation and small blisters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Allow the rash area to air dry.</li> <li>■ Clean with a mild soap, rinse and pat dry.</li> <li>■ Avoid irritating the skin.</li> </ul>
<b>Heat cramps</b>	Heavy sweating, with extended period of heat exposure. The cramps result from loss of water, salt and other minerals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Water alone will not replenish the salt and minerals needed to prevent the heat cramps.</li> <li>■ Consume sports drinks when working in hot environments for extended periods.</li> </ul>

\*The foregoing treatment tips are provided by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at: [osha.gov/heat-exposure/illness-first-aid](https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/illness-first-aid).

## Be proactive to decrease your risk

Supervisors should continually monitor conditions on their jobsites to prevent and protect against HRI.

Here are some suggestions for you and your employees:

- Monitor your own and others' physical condition for signs and symptoms of HRI.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing such as cotton.
  - Avoid non-breathable synthetic clothing.
- Gradually build up to heavy work and schedule it during the coolest parts of day.
- Take more breaks when doing heavier work and in high heat and humidity.
  - Find a cool or shady area to take breaks.
- Drink water frequently — enough that you are never thirsty.
- Take necessary steps to provide first aid when HRI symptoms are identified.
- Request immediate assistance if heat stroke symptoms are identified.

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