

Heat Stress

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Factors Leading to Heat Stress

- Temperature and humidity: Higher heat indices can increase risk.
- Direct sunlight or heat: Working in direct sun or near heat sources.
- Limited air movement: Stagnant air can make conditions worse.
- Physical exertion: Heavy work can increase body temperature.
- Physical and medical conditions: Certain health issues can exacerbate heat stress.
- Medications: Some drugs can impair heat tolerance.
- Lack of tolerance: New employees or those unaccustomed to heat are at higher risk.

Heat Stress Prevention Tips

- Know the signs: Learn the symptoms of heat-related illnesses.
- Avoid direct sunlight: Stay in shaded areas or away from heat sources.
- Use cooling methods: Fans, air conditioning, and regular breaks can help.
- Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water or high-electrolyte fluids.
- Wear appropriate clothing: Lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting.
- Avoid alcohol and heavy meals: These can worsen heat stress.

Common Heat Illnesses and First Aid

- Heat Rash: Red pimples or blisters due to excessive sweating. Treat by cleansing and drying the area.
- Heat Cramps: Painful muscle spasms from electrolyte loss. Rehydrate and rest in a cool place.
- Heat Syncope: Dizziness or fainting from dehydration or physical exertion. Move to a shaded area, elevate legs, and provide cool fluids.
- Heat Exhaustion: Fatigue, profuse sweating, headache, and dizziness. Cool the individual and provide fluids if they are conscious.
- Heat Stroke: Body temperature over 104°F, hot skin, rapid pulse, confusion, or seizures. This is a medical emergency; call for help and cool the person with fans, misting, or ice packs.

Employer Best Practices

- Emergency action plan: Establish communication procedures, emergency response, and first aid training.
- Monitor weather conditions: Use apps like the OSHA/NIOSH Heat Safety Tool to track heat indices.
- Employee monitoring: Supervisors should closely watch workers, especially new employees, during high heat.

- Provide shaded areas and water: Ensure breaks and rest periods are adequate and encourage hydration.
- Gradual acclimatization: Introduce new employees to heat gradually to prevent heat stress.

Additional Safety Measures for Extreme Heat Conditions

- Heat wave precautions: Provide large shaded areas for breaks and encourage regular rest.
- Increase monitoring: Ensure supervisors are closely monitoring employees in high-heat situations.
- Institute extra break periods: During extreme heat, require breaks after every two hours of work.
- Communicate with supervisors: Ensure reliable communication for emergencies and general safety.