

# Heat Related Illnesses and Injuries

When your body is unable to cool itself through sweating, serious heat illnesses may occur. The most severe heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If actions are not taken to treat heat exhaustion, the illness could progress to heat stroke and you could possibly die.

## Heat exhaustion

What happens to your body?:

- headaches
- dizziness/lightheadedness
- weakness
- mood changes (irritable, or confused or can't think straight)
- feeling sick to your stomach
- vomiting/throwing up
- decreased and dark colored urine
- fainting/passing out; pale clammy skin

## Heat stroke—A medical emergency

What happens to your body?:

- Dry pale skin (no sweating)
- hot red skin (looks like a sunburn)
- mood changes (irritable, confused or not making any sense)
- seizures/fits
- collapse/passed out (will not respond)



## Things you can do to prevent difficulties from heat related illnesses and injuries:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of heat-induced illnesses and what you can do to help yourself or a fellow employee.
- Use the buddy system (work in pairs) when working in hot conditions.
- Drink plenty of cool water (one small cup every 15-20 minutes).
- Wear light, loose-fitting, breathable (like cotton) clothing.
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments.
- Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages (these beverages make your body lose water and increase the risk for heat illnesses).

- Slowly build up tolerance to the heat and your work activity (usually takes about two weeks).
- Do your heaviest work in the coolest part of the day.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool shaded areas. This allows your body to cool down.

## You are at increased risk when you:

- Take certain medications. Check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacy and ask if any medicines you are taking affect you while working in hot environments.
- Have had a heat-induced illness in the past.
- Wear some personal protective equipment such as respirators or protective suits.