

HEAT EXPOSURE

While symptoms can vary from person to person, if a co-worker appears to be disorientated or confused (including euphoria), or has unaccountable irritability, malaise or flu-like symptoms, the worker should be moved to a cool location and seek medical advice. The victims of heatstroke are unable to notice the symptoms, and therefore, their survival depends on co-workers' ability to identify symptoms and to seek medical help.

Prevention

- assess the demands of all jobs and have monitoring and control strategies in place for hot days
- increase the frequency and length of rest breaks
- schedule hot jobs to cooler times of the day
- provide cool drinking water near workers and remind them to drink a cup every 20 minutes or so
- workers should salt their food well, particularly while they are acclimatizing to a hot job (workers with a low salt diet should discuss this with their doctor)
- assign additional workers or slow down work pace
- make sure everyone is properly acclimatized
- workers with a medical condition should discuss working in the heat with their doctor
- train workers to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stress and start a 'buddy system' since people are not likely to notice their own symptoms

Heat cramps are painful spasms of the muscles. The muscles used in doing the work are most susceptible. Symptoms include painful cramps in arms, legs or stomach which occur suddenly at work or later at home. Cramps are serious because they can be a warning of other more dangerous heat-induced illnesses.

Move to a cool area; loosen clothing and drink cool salted water (1 tsp. salt per gallon of water) or commercial fluid replacement beverage. If the cramps are severe or don't go away, seek medical aid.

Heat exhaustion results when the body loses large amounts of fluid by sweating during work in hot environments. The skin becomes cool and clammy. Symptoms include heavy sweating; cool moist skin; weak pulse; dizziness, nausea, blurred vision, headache or cramps; person is tired, weak, clumsy, upset or confused; is very thirsty; or is panting or breathing rapidly.

GET MEDICAL AID. This condition can lead to heatstroke, which can kill. Move the person to a cool shaded area; loosen or remove excess clothing; provide cool water to drink (salted if possible); fan and spray with cool water.

Heatstroke is the most serious condition and requires immediate medical attention. The body stops sweating, and its temperature becomes very high (even exceeding 41°C). Symptoms include the person is weak, confused, upset or acting strangely; has hot, dry, red skin; a fast pulse; a headache or dizziness. In later stages, a person may pass out and have convulsions.

CALL AMBULANCE. This condition can kill a person quickly. Remove excess clothing; fan and spray the person with cool water; offer sips of cool water if the person is conscious.

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** Provided as general information only. A physician should always be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions*