

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

OUTDOOR HEAT SAFETY

As we get further into summer, more time is spent outdoors, both at work and during our personal time. While this is beneficial in many ways, it also poses hazards in the form of heat illness, when your body can't adequately cool itself through sweating. This is most likely to happen during hot, humid weather and when performing hard physical work. There are several levels of heat illness severity:

Heat Cramps/Rash: Physical irritations to the skin and muscles that occur due to excessive sweating and reduced salt levels in the muscles. This can usually resolve on its own with rest and fluids/snacks, though medical care may be needed if the cramps do not go away within an hour.

Heat Syncope: Fainting or dizziness that usually occurs with prolonged standing or a sudden change in posture from sitting to standing. This may require medical care if resting and drinking fluids do not resolve the symptoms.

Heat Exhaustion: The body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through excessive sweating. This requires medical care.

Heat Stroke: This is the most serious heat-related illness and occurs when the body is no longer able to control its temperature. Heat stroke can be fatal and requires immediate emergency care.



Follow these tips to stay safe while spending time outdoors in the heat:

- ❖ Give yourself time to acclimatize (20% exposure on the first day and up to 20% more each day after). This will put less stress on your body as it adapts to the heat over time.
- ❖ Ensure a plentiful free supply of cool water and encourage drinking throughout the day.
- ❖ Drink sports drinks to replenish salt levels.
- ❖ Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can cause dehydration.
- ❖ Provide shade when temperatures reach 80 degrees and allow for frequent rest breaks in the shade or in an air-conditioned building. Take more frequent rest breaks if the temperature spikes or during a heat wave.
- ❖ Wear loose fitting, breathable, light-colored, and lightweight clothing. Long sleeves help prevent sunburn and wide-brimmed hats provide shade.
- ❖ Notify your supervisor immediately if you notice symptoms of heat illness in yourself or someone else.
- ❖ Avoid working alone when possible; if you must work alone, do frequent check-ins with a supervisor.

Helping to keep our member's employees safe! This Safety Spotlight brought to you by: