

HEAT-RELATED EMERGENCIES



Heat-related emergencies occur when the body becomes dehydrated, which may result in an increased body temperature. Heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke, can happen to anyone who stays in the summer heat and sun for too long. Anyone who must perform heavy work in the summer heat and sun run a greater risk of a heat-related emergency.

Here are some tips to prevent heat-related emergencies:

- Drink plenty of cool fluids – this is the most important step you can take.
- Avoid being outside during the hottest part of the day.
- Know the humidex rating – it combines the temperature and humidity to indicate how hot, humid weather feels to the average person.
- Wear light, loose clothing to let air circulate and heat escape. Also, always wear a hat.
- Apply sunscreen (with SPF 15 or higher) as sunburned skin reduces the body's ability to cool itself.
- Slow down your activities as it gets hotter and don't work, exercise, or play for too long at a time.
- Take a lot of breaks in a cool or shady area to let your body cool off. This will help if you do need to be outside when it's really hot.

The chart below shows three of the common heat stress hazards and what to do if someone is suffering from a heat-related emergency.

HEAT STRESS HAZARDS				
CONDITION	CAUSE	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT	PREVENTION
Heat Cramps	Heavy sweating drains a person's body of salt, which cannot be replaced just by drinking water.	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 Tbsp salt per gallon of water) or commercial fluid replacement beverage. If the cramps are severe or don't go away, seek medical aid.	When working in the heat, workers should put salt on their food (if on a low salt diet, this should be discussed with a Doctor). This will give the body all the salt it needs. Do not take salt tablets.
Heat Exhaustion	Inadequate salt and water intake causes a body's cooling system to start to break down.	Heavy sweating; cool, moist skin; body temperature over 38C; weak pulse; normal or low blood pressure; person is tired, weak, clumsy, upset or confused; is very thirsty or is panting or breathing rapidly; vision may be blurred.	GET MEDICAL AID. This condition can lead to heat stroke, 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.	Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Workers should check on each other to help spot the symptoms which often precede heat stroke.
Heat Stroke	If a person's body has used up all it's water and salt, it will stop sweating. This can cause body temperature to rise.	High body temperature (over 40C) and any one of the following: the person is weak, confused, upset or acting strangely; has hot, dry, red skin; a faint 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.	Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Workers should check on each other to help spot the symptoms which often precede heat stroke.