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JULY Safety Talk

Topic: Heat Stress

Do you know the signs, symptoms, treatment and prevention of heat stress disorders?

Heat Stress Hazards				
CONDITION	CAUSE	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT	PREVENTION
Heat Rash	Hot, humid environment; plugged sweat glands.	Red bumpy rash with severe itching	Change into dry clothes and avoid hot environments. Rinse skin with cool water.	Wash regularly to keep skin clean and dry.
Sunburn	Too much exposure to the sun.	Red, painful or blistering and peeling skin.	If the skin blisters, seek medical aid. Use skin lotions (avoid topical anaesthetics) and work in the shade.	Work in the shade; cover skin with clothing; wear sunscreen lotions with a sun protection factor of a least 15. People with fair skin should be especially cautious.
Heat Cramps	Heavy sweating drains a person 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.
Fainting	Not enough blood flowing to the head, causing loss of consciousness.	Sudden fainting after at least two hours of work, cool moist skin, weak pulse.	Fainting may be due to a heart attack or other illness. GET MEDICAL ATTENTION. Assess need for CPR. Move to a cool area; loosen clothing; make person lie down and if the person is conscious, offer sips of 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 Exhaustion	Inadequate salt and water intake causes a person's 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 its 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.