

Heat-related illness

The human body works hard to keep its temperature at 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. When it's too hot, the body will rid itself of excess heat. Two ways it does this are sweating and dilation (widening) of blood vessels. When sweat evaporates from the skin, you begin to cool off. When blood vessels dilate, blood is brought to the skin to release heat.

When the air temperature is higher than the body's temperature, the body cannot easily cool itself. If the air is humid, or the body is wrapped in heavy clothing and protective gear, sweat does not evaporate quickly.

Heat-related illness can be a concern in any weather, indoors or out.

Hot tips to cool conditions

You should know how to recognize a victim of heat-related illness. Evaluate the symptoms, then follow these first aid actions:

Heat cramps: Symptoms include heavy sweating during intense exercise and muscle cramps or spasms. Have the worker drink water or an electrolyte drink. Gently stretch, massage and ice the muscle.

Heat syncope: Look out for fainting, dizziness, and light-headedness during prolonged standing or after suddenly rising from sitting or lying down. Have the worker lie down in a cool area. Remove heavy clothing and loosen any tight-fitting clothing.

Heat exhaustion:

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Fast breathing
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Headache/dizziness
- Fainting
- Possible convulsions

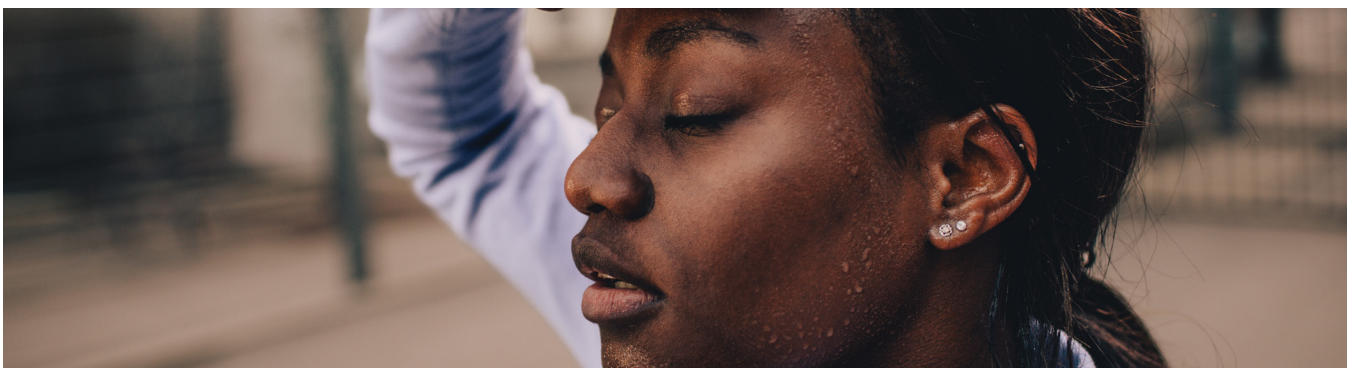
Lay the worker down on his or her back in a cool area. Remove excessive layers of clothing. Give water or an electrolyte drink.

Do not give anything to drink if the worker vomits. Cool the worker with a cool water spray or wet cloths and a fan.

Heatstroke:

- Body temperature above 103 degrees F
- Hot, red, dry or damp skin
- Fast, strong pulse
- Headache/dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Losing consciousness

Call for medical help immediately. While you wait for help to arrive, immediately cool the victim with any means at hand, preferably by immersing the victim up to the neck in cold water. Alternatively, move the worker to a cool place and remove clothing down to the underwear, then apply ice packs at the neck, armpits and groin. Or, cover the worker with wet towels or cloths or spray them with cool water, and fan the worker to quickly evaporate the dampness on the skin.



Catch it early

Supervisors and workers alike need to watch for warning signs of heat illness in workers. Workers adapt to the heat, but they should know their limits and supervisors should never push beyond those limits. Workers can take other preventive measures to combat the heat:

- **CHECK** the weather before work
- **FIGHT** the sun and wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes, and a hat
- **CONSIDER** water-dampened or reflective clothing, cooling vests
- **WEAR** sunscreen and reapply regularly – at least every two hours
- **DRINK** water or an electrolyte drink – one cup (eight ounces) every 15-20 minutes - even when you're not thirsty.
- **TAKE** scheduled rest breaks in air-conditioned or cool, shaded areas
- **REMOVE** unneeded protective equipment while on break
- **BE A "BUDDY"** – watch for co-workers' heat-related illness symptoms

Hot conditions don't have to be dangerous if you watch for the warning signs, and work together to prevent heat-related illness.

