Heat Stress For Workers

Effects of heat stress range from simple discomfort to life-threatening illnesses such as heat stroke.

- Heat stress causes increased sweating, depleting the body's fluid and causing heat intolerance.
- Heat rashes – rash from wet skin from sweat.
- Heat cramps – cramping from heat.
- Heat exhaustion – body produces more heat than it can release through sweating. Dehydration from excessive sweating and not replacing fluids.
- Heat stroke – body is unable to cool itself and core temperature rises to a critical level.

Risk Factors for Heat Stress:
- Temperature & humidity
- Movement of air
- Radiant temperature of surroundings
- Clothing
- Physical activity
- Poor physical condition

Factors Increasing Risk of Heat Stress:
- Poor physical condition
- Overweight
- Pregnancy
- Suffer from heart disease
- Abuse alcohol, caffeine, drugs, and some prescription medications
- Not acclimatized to hot temperatures
- Age

- Some people are less tolerant of heat than others. Care should be taken to have a safe system of work that does not endanger these people.

Factors to Consider to Control Heat Stress:
- Hydration – Drink 16oz water 30 minutes before work, and 8oz water every 20 minutes
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, juices, soda, and high sugar drinks
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, and light-colored clothes
- Take breaks in a cool area
- Wear breathable, light-colored, wide-brimmed hat

Signs & Symptoms of Heat Stress:
- Headache, dizziness, nausea, fainting, or vomiting
- Excessive sweating, thirst, and rapid heartbeat
- Cool, pale, clammy skin
- Irritability or confusion
- Increase in body temperature or a fever

Treating Heat Stress:
- Help the person out of the sun into a cool air-conditioned area
- Lay down with feet and legs slightly elevated
- Remove and loosen clothing
- Drink cool water
- Fan with cool air
- Wet the body with cool water
- Place a damp, cool towel around the back of the neck

Salt Tablets:
Salt tablets are not recommended and should only be taken on the direct advice of a physician. Usually sufficient salt is absorbed from food eaten to provide replacement of all salt lost in sweating. However, in cases of extreme sweating, extra salt may be added to food during cooking or eating.

Heatstroke:
Heatstroke is a very serious condition. It is less common than heat stress, but can be life threatening. Call 911 or emergency medical help if the person's condition worsens, especially if fainting, confusion or seizures occur, or if fever of 104° F or greater occurs with other symptoms.

Signs & Symptoms of Heatstroke:
- Chills
- Restlessness or irritability
- Euphoria, disorientation or erratic behavior
- Hot & dry skin
- Collapse, unconsciousness or convulsions

Until medical aid is available, cool the person down as quickly as possible, such as by soaking the person's clothing in cold water, giving cool fluids if the person is conscious, and increasing air movement by fanning.