Heat Stress
Understand heat stress risk factors, prevention, and treatment

Know your risk factors

Health Problems
- Diarrhea, vomiting, cold, or the flu
- Chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease
- Being overweight or obese
- Poor physical fitness

Activities
- High exertion
- Not enough rest breaks
- Repeated strenuous days in the heat
- Working through discomfort

Environment
- High temperatures and humidity
- Direct sun exposure
- Lack of wind or breeze
- Closeness to engines or hot equipment

Medications
Medications taken for:
- Muscle spasms
- Blood pressure
- Diarrhea
- Urine production (diuretics)
- Cold, allergies, and congestion
- Dizziness/vertigo
- Psychosis
- Depression

Other Factors
- Dehydration
- Prior heat illness
- Age over 60
- Prolonged PPE use
- Non-breathable clothing
- Alcohol use in the past 24 hours

Poor Acclimatization
Those requiring acclimatization:
- New workers
- Experienced workers used to heat but returning from time away
- Any worker experiencing sudden temperature changes (e.g., chiller failure)

Stay hydrated
- Drink before feeling thirsty. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already behind in fluid replacement.
- When working in the heat, drink 1 cup (8 ounces) every 15–20 minutes (about 1 quart per hour).

Get acclimatized to the heat
- Gradually get used to the heat over about 7–14 days.
- Remember that about one week away from work weakens your acclimatization.
- Remember that about one month away from work requires re-acclimatization when returning to the job.

Apply first aid for heat illness
- Heat stress: sit or rest in a cool place, slowly drink water or clear juice.
- Heat exhaustion: remove worker from hot area, give liquids, remove unnecessary clothing, cool with water, ice, fans, or whatever is available.
- Heat stroke: call for emergency care immediately, especially with any mental status change, cool with water, ice, fans, or whatever is available.

Heat stroke can be fatal if treatment is delayed. Cooling and emergency care are the priorities.

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