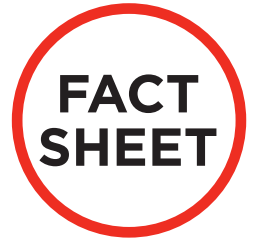


RECOGNISING AND TREATING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS AT WORK



Workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments (both indoor and outdoor) may be at risk of heat-related illness (formerly known as heat stress), which can be fatal.

Heat-related illness is a term used to describe a range of increasingly harmful medical conditions that can happen when the body is unable to cool itself down enough to maintain a healthy temperature:

Stages of heat-related illness	Symptoms	WHAT TO DO
<p>1. Dehydration comes first. It causes the heart to work faster and leads to reduced fluid being available to sweat. Being dehydrated by just 2% impairs a person's performance in tasks that require attention, coordination and immediate memory skills. Dehydration can also cause painful heat cramps in muscles from the loss of salt and water (usually affects people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity).</p>	<p>People can experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mild to severe thirst • dry lips and tongue • decreased amount of urine passed that appears darker than normal • increased breathing and heart rate • weakness or light-headedness (particularly when standing) 	<p>Immediate first aid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move the person to a cool place with circulating air, such as a site shed (air-conditioned where possible) or in a shaded area • Loosen all tight clothing and remove unnecessary garments, including PPE (mask, apron, overalls, etc). • Give the person cool (not cold) fluids to drink – preferably water. • Obtain medical advice if symptoms don't improve.
<p>2. If dehydration is not treated, it can lead to heat exhaustion, which is the body's response to the excessive loss of water and salt from sweating.</p>	<p>People can experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling hot, exhausted, weak and fatigued • persistent headache • intense thirst as well as nausea and vomiting • feeling dizzy and faint • being clumsy with slower reaction times • poor judgement • rapid breathing and shortness of breath • rapid weak pulse, palpitations • tingling, numbness of fingers and/or toes • visual disturbance. 	<p>Immediate first aid and medical treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow DRSABCD emergency protocol (Danger, Response, Send for help, Airway, Breathing, CPR and Defibrillation). Call for an Ambulance - triple zero (000). • Move the patient to lie down in a cool place with circulating air, such as a site shed (air-conditioned where possible) or a shaded area • Loosen all tight clothing and remove unnecessary garments, including PPE (mask, apron, overalls, etc). • Apply cold packs or wrapped ice to neck, groin and armpits.

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Stages of heat-related illness	Symptoms	WHAT TO DO
<p>3. If heat exhaustion is not treated, it can lead to heat hyperpyrexia (a medical term meaning ‘an extremely high rise of core body temperature that is equal to or higher than 40.5 °C’).</p>	<p>People can experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> moist skin mental dysfunction, such as poor judgement, slower reaction times, irritability, clumsiness, etc. 	<p>Immediate first aid and medical treatment (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover the person with a wet sheet (or similar) until the ambulance arrives. If a wet sheet isn’t practicable, sponge the person down with cool (not cold) water and fan them with gentle air movement until the ambulance arrives. Important: Be careful the patient doesn’t start to shiver – it’s an automatic muscular reaction which will make the core body temperature rise even further. If shivering happens, remove the wet sheet / stop sponging immediately and cover the patient until they stop shivering. Once they have stopped, commence sponging the patient again with cool (not cold) water. Ensure an ambulance has been called – triple zero (000) so the patient can be assessed at the scene and, if considered necessary, transferred to hospital to receive medical attention. If conscious and able to swallow, give the patient cool (not cold) fluids to drink – preferably water. Ring the ambulance again to advise if the person has a seizure or becomes unconscious.
<p>4. If heat exhaustion is not treated, it can result in heat stroke, which is a life-threatening medical emergency and potentially fatal.</p> <p>Heat stroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40.5°C.</p>	<p>Victims stop sweating and develop flushed, dry, hot skin.</p> <p>Other symptoms include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oral or armpit temperature readings of possibly over 41°C pounding rapid pulse headache, nausea and/or vomiting dizziness and visual disturbances being clumsy with slower reaction times poor judgement irritability and mental confusion which may lead to collapse, fitting and unconsciousness. 	

Heat-related illness can also cause:

- worsening of existing medical conditions
- unprecedented or unanticipated health problems that haven’t previously existed
- Heat rash (prickly heat)** – an itchy rash of small raised red spots on the face, neck, back, chest and thighs caused by hot and moist environments.

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