

HEAT ILLNESS CAN BE DEADLY

Every year, thousands of workers become sick from exposure to heat, and some even die. Heat illnesses and deaths are preventable. Employers are responsible for providing workplaces that are safe from excessive heat.

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken such as drinking water frequently and resting in the shade or air conditioning. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps, to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

Employers should establish a complete heat illness prevention program to prevent heat illness. This includes:

- Providing workers with water, rest and shade
- Gradually increasing workloads and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away for a week or more to build a tolerance for working in the heat (acclimatization)
- Modifying work schedules as necessary
- Planning for emergencies and train workers about the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and their prevention
- Monitoring workers for signs of illness.



Why is it important to prevent heat illness?

- Heat illness can be a matter of life and death. Workers die from heat stroke every summer and every death is preventable.
- When heat stroke doesn't kill immediately, it can shut down major body organs causing acute heart, liver, kidney, and muscle damage, nervous system problems, and blood disorders.
- Having a serious injury or death occur at work affects everyone at a worksite.
- Workers suffering from heat exhaustion are at greater risk for accidents, since they are less alert and can be confused.

Heat Exhaustion

- Headache
- Dizziness and/or Fainting
- Weakness
- Wet skin
- Irritability
- Thirst
- Nausea or vomiting

WARNING
**If you feel faint,
confused, or vomit—
seek medical help
immediately.**

Heat Stroke

- May be confused
- May be unable to think clearly
- May pass out
- May collapse
- May have seizures (fits)
- May stop sweating

Prevent heat illness by remembering these simple steps:

WATER • REST • SHADE

For additional information go to: osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html

For additional resources or to contact DLS, visit: mass.gov/info-details/safetyworks-resources