



TOOLBOX TALKS

Safety is more than a slogan.



HEAT STRESS

Background

Working in a hot environment puts stress on the body's cooling system. When heat is combined with other stresses - like hard physical work, loss of fluids, or fatigue - it may lead to heat-related illness, Disability, or even death!

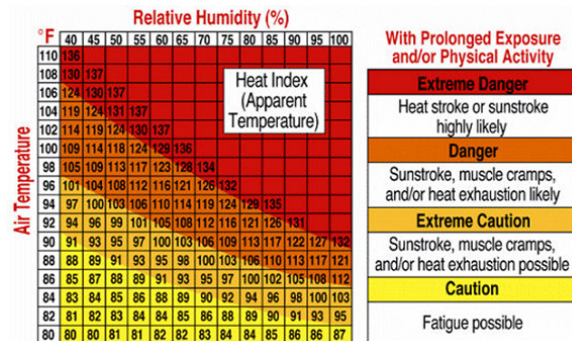
Water is crucial to helping the body adjust to high temperatures. The rate of water intake must equal the increased rate of water loss by perspiration to keep body temperature normal. Your body must work even harder to get rid of excess heat when conditions are both hot and humid. When it's hot, drink plenty of water!

Don't push yourself beyond your limits. It could be harmful to your health, and could put you at increased risk of having an accident.

Heat-Related Illnesses

Dehydration occurs when the loss of body fluids exceeds the amount that is taken in. With dehydration, more water is moving out of our cells and bodies than what we take in through drinking.

Along with the water, small amounts of electrolytes are also lost. When we lose too much water, our bodies may become out of balance or dehydrated. Severe dehydration can lead to death.



Heat cramps are painful, brief muscle cramps. Muscles may spasm or jerk involuntarily. Heat cramps can occur during exercise or work in a hot environment or begin a few hours later. Heat cramps usually involve muscles that are fatigued by heavy work, such as calves, thighs, and shoulders.

Painful cramps occur in the arms, legs, or stomach while on the job, or later at home. Move to a cool area at once if cramping is experienced. Loosen clothing and drink cool water or an electrolyte replacement beverage, such as Gatorade. Seek medical aid if the cramps are severe, or don't go away.

Heat exhaustion can occur after you've been exposed to high temperatures for several days and have become dehydrated. Symptoms include confusion, dizziness, headache and fatigue.

Although heat exhaustion isn't as serious as heat stroke, it isn't something to be taken lightly. Without proper intervention, heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke, which can damage the brain and other vital organs, and even cause death. If you, or anyone else, have symptoms of heat exhaustion immediately get out of the heat and rest, preferably in an air-conditioned room. If you can't get inside, try to find the nearest cool and shady place.

Heat stroke is the most serious form of heat injury and is a medical emergency. Heat stroke often occurs as a progression from milder heat-related illnesses such as heat cramps and heat exhaustion. But it can strike even if you have no previous signs of heat injury.



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Heat stroke can kill or cause damage to the brain and other internal organs. Although heat stroke mainly affects people over age 50, it also takes a toll on healthy young athletes. The hallmark symptom of heat stroke is a core body temperature above 105° Fahrenheit. But fainting may be the first sign.

If you suspect that someone has heat stroke -- also known as sunstroke -- you should call 911 immediately. Until help arrives, move the victim to a cool area and remove excess clothing. Fan and spray them with cool water. Offer sips of water if the victim is conscious

Heatwave Guidelines

The following measures will help prevent the development of heat-related illnesses.

- Slowdown in hot weather. Your body's temperature regulating system faces a much greater workload when temperature and humidity are high.
- Heed early warnings of heat stress, such as headache, heavy perspiration, high pulse rate, and shallow breathing. Take a break immediately and get to a cooler location. Watch for heat stress signs among your co-workers.
- Dress for hot weather. Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Consider beverages that replace electrolytes lost when you sweat, such as Gatorade
- Try to get used to warm weather gradually. Take it easy for those first two or three hot days. Your body will have a better chance to adjust if you take it slow.
- Get out of the heat occasionally. Physical stress increases with time in hot weather. Take breaks in a cool, shady location.
- Don't try to get a suntan while you are working! It's harder for your internal cooling system to work through sunburned skin. Wear a hat and light-colored long-sleeved shirt to prevent burning (which we know can increase the risk of skin cancer.)

Other Topics Discussed:



If you have not been properly trained on this topic, do not have the proper safety equipment available for use or you are not comfortable with what you are being asked to do, **DO NOT PROCEED** until the expected safety standards have been met. If you have questions or concerns, please contact O&G's Safety Department. You may also contact the O&G Safety Hotline anonymously by calling (860) 496-4866.

