

HEAT ILLNESS PREVENTION GUIDE

Every year, millions of workers are exposed to hot work environments, and thousands suffer from heat-related illnesses. Even those accustomed to the heat must stay alert, as its impact can differ from person to person.

This guide will help you recognize the factors that could increase your risk of heat illness.* Elements such as your work environment, clothing, tasks, health conditions, medications, and physical traits can all contribute to a heightened risk of heat-related issues.

WORK RISK FACTORS

Environmental factors that increase your risk of heat injury and illness:

- High temperature or humidity
- Heat from hot sources (radiant heat), such as furnaces
- Limited movement of cool air
- Direct sun exposure



The nature of your work can increase your vulnerability to heat-related illness:

- Level of physical activity/exertion
- Clothing or protective gear that limits your body's ability to cool itself
- Inadequate rest breaks
- Inadequate acclimatization



PHYSICAL & BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTORS

Some physical characteristics may dehydrate you more quickly and reduce your body's ability to cool:

- Age (60 years and older)
- Physical fitness
- Pregnancy
- Acclimatization level (i.e., whether you've developed a tolerance to the working temperature)



What you put into your body can lead to dehydration:

- Alcohol use
- Use of illicit drugs
- Lower intake of water



PERSONAL RISK FACTORS

Some health conditions can impair your ability to sense or respond to changes in temperature:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Mental health conditions
- Respiratory diseases, like asthma or COPD



Some medications can decrease your ability to feel hot and impair your body's ability to sweat, making it harder to cool down:

- Antihistamines
- Blood pressure medications
- Diuretics
- Muscle relaxants
- Sedatives



SAFETY TIPS



Heat-related injuries and illnesses can be prevented. Follow these tips to stay safe while working:

- Stay hydrated
- Rest in air-conditioned or cool, shaded areas
- Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing in breathable fabrics to help your body cool efficiently
- Upon returning to work after time off or during hot weather, slowly ease back into your usual workload
- Learn the symptoms of heat-related illnesses:
 - Abnormal thinking or behavior
 - Slurred speech
 - Excessive sweating or hot, dry skin
 - Elevated body temperature
 - Headache or nausea
 - Weakness/dizziness
- Check on your coworkers. If someone shows signs of heat illness, cool them down with water or ice and stay with them until help arrives
- When in doubt, don't hesitate to call 911!

*This is not a comprehensive list. Many factors can make you susceptible to heat illness. Sources: OSHA: www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/NIOSH: "Heat Stress Risk Factors" and the CDC: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/recommendations.html