



Ascension

# Injury Prevention of the Month

## Heat Illness



Heat Illness is an often overlooked risk when working outdoors in extreme heat and humidity, and can range from heat rashes and cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke (which is life-threatening). However, heat illness is **preventable** when you can do these things:

- Recognize the signs and symptoms
- Know how to treat properly
- Utilize prevention techniques and know risk factors

### Signs and Symptoms

### Treatment

#### Heat Cramps

- Severe, sometimes disabling, cramps that typically begin suddenly in the hands, calves, or feet
- Hard, tense muscles

#### What You Should Do:

- Move to a cooler or air conditioned area.
- Sip water slowly until the cramps go away.

#### Heat Exhaustion

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting



#### What You Should Do:

- Move to a cooler location.
- Lie down and loosen your clothing.
- Apply cool, wet cloths to as much of your body as possible.
- Sip water.
- If you have vomited and it continues, seek medical attention immediately.

#### Heat Stroke

- High body temperature (above 103°F)\*
- Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Possible unconsciousness



#### What You Should Do:

- Call 911 immediately — **this is a medical emergency.**
- Move the person to a cooler environment.
- Reduce the person's body temperature with cool cloths or even a bath.
- Do **NOT** give fluids.

## Prevention of Heat Illness

- ✓ Hydrate! Drink plenty of cool, fresh water
- ✓ Wear light colored, breathable clothing if possible
- ✓ Take frequent breaks and get out of the sunlight into shade or an air-conditioned space
- ✓ Give workers a period of time to gradually get used to the heat, especially in a heat wave or for new workers
- ✓ Check the color of your urine. Clear or light yellow, like lemonade, means you are hydrated. Darker urine, like the color of apple juice, means you are dehydrated.
- ✓ Train workers on the signs and symptoms of heat illness and prevention techniques

## Factors That Increase Your Risk of Heat Illness

- High humidity
- Lack of wind or breeze to cool the body
- Dehydration
- Lack of acclimatization
- Age over 60 years
- Protective gear, including non-breathable clothing, respirators and chemical-resistant apparel
- History of heat illness
- History of recent illness unrelated to heat (especially involving vomiting or diarrhea)
- Certain medications
- Certain health conditions
- Physically demanding work
- Recent alcohol use (within 24 hours)

### Contact for more information:

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Resources: [https://www.weather.gov/images/safety/Heat\\_Illness.jpg](https://www.weather.gov/images/safety/Heat_Illness.jpg)  
<https://blog.mass.gov/publichealth/workplace-health-and-safety/the-heat-is-on-but-heat-illness-is-preventable/>  
<http://trainandcert.com/articles/worker-safety-articles/heat-stress-safety-tips-to-prevent-worker-heat-illness/>  
<http://www.oshaagspa.org/toolbox-talk-heat-illness-identification/>  
<http://www.safetymoment.net/2014/03/heat-related-illness/>