Heat stress

List cooling stations on site.

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Explain dangers

When your body's cooling system can't keep up with the heat, you dehydrate and your temperature rises above 38°C. That's when you can get heat-related illnesses such as

- heat rash (plugged sweat glands)
- heat cramps (sweating has caused salt loss)
- heat exhaustion
- heat stroke (very serious—you can die).

Let's take a look at two serious heat illnesses: heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is when your body cannot keep blood flowing both to vital organs and to the skin for cooling.

Symptoms

- weakness, feeling faint
- headache
- breathlessness
- nausea or vomiting
- difficulty continuing work.

Treatment

Get medical aid and cool down (move to a shaded area, loosen clothing, drink cool water). It takes 30 minutes at least to cool the body down from heat exhaustion, and if it's not treated promptly, it can lead to heat stroke.

HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. You can die from it. Your body has used up all its water and salt and cannot cool itself. Your temperature rises to dangerous levels.

Symptoms

- confusion and irrational behaviour
- convulsions
- unconsciousness
- no sweating—hot, dry skin
- high body temperature—40°C or more.

Treatment

If a co-worker shows symptoms of heat stroke, you should act fast.

- Call the local emergency number or get the worker to a hospital.
- Take aggressive steps to cool the worker down (immerse in a tub of cool water or cool shower, spray with a hose, wrap in cool, wet sheets and fan rapidly).
- If the worker is unconscious, don't give anything to drink.

Identify controls

Here's how to avoid heat stress in the first place:

- Wear light, loose clothing that allows sweat to evaporate. Light-coloured garments absorb less heat from the sun.
- Drink small amounts of water (8 oz) every half hour. Don't wait until you're thirsty.
- Avoid coffee, tea, beer, or other drinks that make you go to the bathroom frequently.
- Avoid eating hot, heavy meals that increase your body temperature.
- Remember that your physical condition can reduce your ability to deal with the heat. Age, weight, fitness, health conditions (heart disease or high blood pressure), recent illness, or medications can all affect your ability to withstand high temperatures.