

# Fatal Hazard – Hot-Weather Work Can Kill

**Employers:** Protect yourself and your workers by learning the signs and symptoms of heat stress and how to treat it. Heat stress occurs in a hot environment when a worker's body cannot cool quickly enough. The three major forms of heat stress are heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion is a serious problem, and heat stroke can kill you.

## What are the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke?

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
Heavy sweating Heavy thirst Panting/rapid breathing Rapid pulse Headache Blurred vision Exhaustion, weakness Clumsiness Confusion Dizziness or fainting Cramps	No sweating Red or flushed, hot dry skin Any symptom of heat exhaustion but more severe Difficult breathing Pinpoint pupils Bizarre behavior Convulsions Confusion Collapse

## What do you do if someone is suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke?

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke (medical emergency)
Move the victim to a cool shaded area to rest; <b>do not leave him or her alone</b> Loosen and remove heavy clothing Give cool water to drink, about a cup every 15 minutes Fan the person, spray with cool water, or apply a wet cloth to his or her skin Call 911 if he or she does not feel better in a few minutes Remove from hot environment work that day	<b>Get medical help immediately, call 911</b> Move the victim to a cool shaded area; <b>do not leave him or her alone</b> Lay the person down Loosen and remove heavy clothing Fan the person, spray with cool water, or wipe with a wet cloth or cover with a wet sheet Place icepacks under the armpits and in the groin area

## How do you protect yourself from excessive heat stress?

Learn the signs and symptoms of heat stress. Drink plenty of water or electrolyte drinks, even when not thirsty. Try to do the heaviest work during the cooler parts of the day. Adapt the pace of work to the heat – take more breaks, go slower when possible. Build up a tolerance to the heat and your work slowly. • Wear light-weight, loose-fitting, light-colored, breathable (e.g. cotton) clothing and hat.	Take regular breaks in the shade. Avoid alcohol or drinks with caffeine before or during work. Keep an eye on co-workers for symptoms of heat stress. • If you start feeling ill, stop what you are doing immediately and take steps to cool down. Tell your supervisor.
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## Where can I learn more?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) features a topic page on heat stress at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress>

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also has an information page on heat stress at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress/index.html>