



PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HEAT ILLNESS

BACK GROUND

In a one-year investigation of 25 cases of suspected heat-related illnesses, Cal/OSHA found that more than half of the heat illness victims died, and almost one third of them required hospitalization. Heat illness can kill you. During hot weather you must take the simple steps outlined here to protect yourself.

WHAT IS HEAT ILLNESS?

Heat illness can be one or more serious medical conditions like heat cramps, fainting, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

WHAT CAUSES HEAT ILLNESS?

Heat illness occurs when your body keeps in more heat than it loses and your temperature rises. You are at greater risk of heat illness when you:

- Are dehydrated. Dehydration is your worst enemy during hot weather.
- Are not used to working in the heat.
- Are in poor health.
- Have had heat illness before.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT HEAT ILLNESS?

Your two best defenses against the heat are:

- Getting out of the sun or finding a cool resting place when you are starting to overheat and need to cool down.
- Drinking cool, fresh water throughout the day (four 8-oz cups per hour) during hot weather. That is how much water your body loses just by sweating. **Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink.**

OTHER THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT HEAT ILLNESS

- **Tell your supervisor immediately if you think you are getting sick from the heat.**
- Know the location(s) of your closest drinking water supplies.
- Choose water over sodas and other drinks containing caffeine or sugar.
- You are better off avoiding alcohol altogether. The more you drink, even beer, the more dehydrated you will get.
- Always know who and how to call for help when you start a new work day.
- Know the symptoms to watch for:
 - Discomfort, excessive sweating, headache, poor concentration, muscle pain, cramping, dizziness, fatigue, irritability, loss of coordination, throwing-up, blurry vision, confusion, lack of sweating, fainting, seizures.
- If you are new to working in the heat, tell your employer. Your employer should have procedures to allow you to adjust during your first two weeks of hot weather work.
- Get your doctor's advice if you know you have risk factors for heat illness, such as:
 - illnesses like diabetes
 - taking medications or over-the-counter drugs
 - being on a low salt diet
- Keep track of your coworkers. You all need to watch out for each other. If anyone looks like they are not okay, check them out.
- After work take a cold bath or shower.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

If you are working outdoors, by law, your employer must guarantee you all of the following:

- Access to fresh, cool drinking water throughout the day.
- Access to shade (all employees) or an equally cool spot for 5 minutes at a time to rest and cool down.
- Training on how to work safely in the heat, including how to call for emergency services if someone is overcome by the heat.