

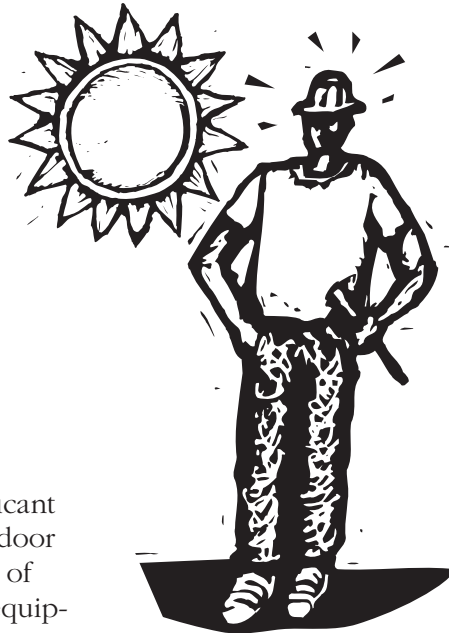
Alert

Heat stress can happen to us all

Hot temperatures combined with factors such as high humidity, hard physical work, loss of body fluids, fatigue or some medical conditions can put stress on the body's cooling system. When this happens it can lead to a heat related illness or disability or even death.

Who's at risk?

Heat stress can happen to anybody, even the young and fit, and heat exposure may occur in all kinds of workplaces. Industrial furnaces, bakeries, smelters, foundries and worksites with heavy equipment are significant sources of heat inside workplaces. For outdoor workers, direct sunlight is the main source of heat. In mines, geothermal gradients and equipment can contribute to exposure.



CONTROLLING HEAT STRESS

- **Acclimatization** – You should take a week or two to get used to the heat and allow your body to adjust. This is called “acclimatization”. Be aware that if you are away from work for a week you may need to re-adjust to the heat.
- **Engineering Controls** – Air-cooling systems, fans and insulating and reflective barriers around furnaces and machinery can help to reduce heat exposure and control workplace temperatures and humidity.
- **Administrative Controls** – Ensure that there are appropriate monitoring and control strategies in place and be ready to take appropriate action for hot days and hot workplaces. To prevent heat stress, increase the frequency and the length of rest breaks and slow down the pace of work.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE HAZARDS OF HEAT STRESS. When it's hot you need to drink a lot of fluids, dress appropriately and recognize the signs of heat stress. If heat exposure is an issue in your workplace you need to develop and implement policies to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Ideas for preventing heat stress



A WSIB-funded research study on the effects of heat stress on firefighters on the job identified the following findings that may help other workplaces:

- Work and rest schedules are not always an effective strategy to lower body temperatures.
- When ambient temperatures exceed about 30°C other strategies should be incorporated with work rest scheduling.
- Active cooling strategies such as air conditioned environments, access to fans and misters and specific actions like forearm submersion may effectively reduce heat stress during rest periods when the protective clothing can be removed.
- Fluid replacement strategies can reduce the risk of heat stress.
- Effective fluid replacement and active cooling strategies during rest periods can help reduce the risk of heat stress to the worker.
- For more information on the research results visit: <http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsbsite.nsf/public/research/resultsfirefightingprotectiveclothing>

Internet Resources

There are many resources available to help you understand and control the hazards of heat stress. Contact the Ministry of Labour or one of Ontario's Health and Safety Associations for more information:

Ontario Ministry of Labour

Ontario Ministry of Labour Heat Stress

Guidelines:

www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/guidelines/gl_heat.html

Health and Safety

Associations in Ontario

www.preventiondynamics.com

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

Humidex-based Heat Stress Calculator

http://www.ohcow.on.ca/menuweb/heat_stress_calculator.htm

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Visit the Heat Stress page in the Prevention section for information and links.

www.wsib.on.ca

or call 1-800-663-6639, (TTY) 1-800-387-0050