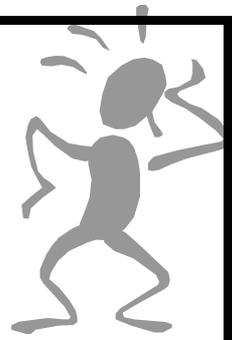




Health Tip



Heat Stress Precautions

Heat stress is a condition where the human body can receive severe and permanent damage, in some instances heat stress has led to the death of the person affected.

It is caused by working in hot conditions without regular rests and rehydration, such as work in the sun, near hot equipment or work in confined space conditions. Heat stress may occur as the result of a heat wave or a constant source of heat at the workplace (or hard physical work in a hot environment).

There are many main factors that can contribute to a person experiencing heat stress - high temperature, high humidity, little or no movement of air, radiant temperature of surroundings, a person's clothing and physical activity.

Heat stress causes increased sweating, depleting the body's fluid and causing heat intolerance. This reduces the body's capacity and efficiency. Typical signs of heat stress include tiredness, irritability, inattention, skin becoming pale and clammy and muscular cramps.

These factors all increase the risk of you having an accident. People who are medically unfit, overweight, suffer from heart disease, abuse alcohol, or are not acclimatized, are at a greater risk of heat stress and should heed medical advice. Some people are less tolerant of heat than others.

How can I avoid heat stress?

- Reduce the heat load by seeking sheltered working places and regularly replacing fluid loss (drink more water, juices and other non-alcoholic drinks).
- Drinks of 100-200ml water at frequent intervals will be adequate to reduce fluid loss from sweating. Drinking some electrolyte sports drinks in addition to water is also recommended.
- Observe the colour of your urine, it should always be pale yellow, any darker colour indicates that your body is dehydrated.
- Avoid Coffee as it is a diuretic i.e. it promotes fluid secretion thereby depleting the body of valuable fluids.
- Have rest pauses in a cool place; Help your sweat evaporate to cool your body, by increasing air circulation; and
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- If a person suffers from acute symptoms, contact medical assistance immediately, and rest the person in the coolest available place and provide cool but not cold fluids until professional assistance can be given.

Should I take salt tablets?

The National Health and Medical Research Council does not recommend the use of salt tablets, which should only be taken on the direct advice of a physician.

What are the signs of heat stroke?

Heat stroke is a very serious condition. It is less common than heat stress, but can be life threatening.

A person will stop sweating, body temperatures will be high (oral temperatures 40-43 degrees C), skin will be hot and dry. Confusion and loss of consciousness may occur.

How should heat stroke be treated?

The person should be treated by a doctor as a matter of urgency. Until medical aid is available, cool the person down as quickly as possible, such as by soaking the victim's clothing in cold water, giving cool fluids if the person is conscious, and increasing air movement by fanning.

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05/02/07 HealthTip08 Heat Stress warning incl disclaimer1.doc

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