

# Tailgate Talk

## Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

You know you're stressed out from the heat when you sweat a lot, have muscle spasms, get a headache, get tiny red bumps on your skin, or feel dizzy, weak, or sick to your stomach. If this describes you on a hot work day, drink plenty of water throughout the day. Take your rest breaks in a cool or shady area. Massage muscle cramps. Use a mild drying lotion to get rid of heat rash. Taking salt tablets is NOT necessary. There's enough salt in your normal diet!

*If a fellow worker passes out from the heat, get them into shade, loosen clothing to cool them down, and give water only when they're conscious.*

### WHAT SIGNS DO YOU NOTICE WHEN YOUR BODY IS TOO HOT?

First, you may notice that you are tired and less mentally alert. This increases the danger of accidents. You may sweat. The body produces sweat so the evaporation will cool you off. Sweating isn't as effective if the air is very humid, because not as much sweat evaporates. Heat rash is possible. You get it when your sweat glands swell and get plugged up. You can get sunburn if you're in direct sunlight too long without using a sunscreen to protect your skin. Sunburn can be painful and may even lead to skin cancer.

### HEAT STRESS, EXHAUSTION, & STROKE

If you don't pay attention to these early symptoms and get out of the heat, you can get **heat stress**. What does this do to your body?

The first symptom is usually **heat cramps**. If you don't replace the fluids and salts (called electrolytes) that you lost by sweating, you may get muscle pain or muscle spasms. These are most common in the arms, legs, back, and stomach.

**Heat exhaustion** can follow. Your whole body (especially your circulatory system) is extremely stressed out. Some possible symptoms are a pale and flushed face and neck, clammy skin, heavy sweating, fatigue, shortness of breath, headache, dizziness, or fainting, nausea, vomiting, rapid heartbeat and breathing.

**Heat stroke** is the most serious stage of heat stress. Your body temperature shoots up. 50% of people with heat stroke die. Symptoms are: dizziness and confusion; red, hot, dry skin; nausea and vomiting; very little sweating; rapid pulse, high body temperature around 105 degrees; convulsions; fainting. Anyone with **heat stroke** must be taken to a doctor or hospital immediately.

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## WHAT'S THE BEST TREATMENT FOR THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF HEAT STRESS?

**Heat cramps** - Stop work, drink fluids, and rest in a cool area. Drinking Gatorade or other electrolyte replacement fluids may also help.

**Heat exhaustion** - Give first aid by moving the person to a cool place to rest. Remove as much clothing as possible. Give the person water. Drinking electrolyte solutions may also help. Don't allow the person to get chilled, and treat for shock if necessary. Get medical help.

**Heat stroke** - Call 911 to get medics immediately. Immerse the person in cool water or ice.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN WORKING IN THE HEAT

- Drink a lot of cool water or an electrolyte replacement drink like Gatorade. You may need a quart or more depending on conditions. Drink even if you don't feel thirsty. Take frequent breaks in an air-conditioned or shaded area.
- Wear appropriate clothing when you're in the sun. The best clothing is a loose, lightweight cotton shirt and pants in a light color.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat in the sun. Wear a lightweight long-sleeve shirt and long pants if it's over 95 degrees.
- Use a sunscreen product to protect your skin from ultraviolet rays in sunlight. It should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 or more. Check the label.
- Limit your use of alcohol. Ask your doctor about prescription drugs you're taking.

*Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.*