

## Summer Heat

Summer is here and we need to think seriously about working in heat and high humidity. Too much heat and humidity can make people sick and in some cases, even cause death. Everyone reacts differently to heat, but we all need to know how to recognize and treat heat emergencies.

Normally the body cools itself by sweating. When the outside temperature is equal to or above the temperature of the body and the humidity is high, our sweat does not evaporate and the body can become overheated. Heat emergencies fall into three different categories:

**Heat Cramps:** Painful spasms of the legs and stomach muscles resulting from a loss of fluids and salt.  
**Treatment:** Massage the cramped muscles and drink fluids.

**Heat Exhaustion:** The skin will be cold, pale, and clammy from perspiration. You may feel fatigue, nausea, weak, faint, and have a headache.

**Treatment:** Move the victim to a cooler place and lay them down with their feet elevated. Have them drink small amounts of fluids at frequent intervals. Medical follow-up may be advisable.

**Heat Stroke:** The most serious and potentially deadly heat emergency. There is a malfunction in the body's regulating system resulting in lack of sweating. One of the symptoms of a heat stroke is mental confusion where the victim may stagger or even lapse into unconsciousness. The skin will be dry, hot and flushed.

**Treatment:** Call an ambulance or nearest medical responder immediately. Move the victim to a cooler place and lay them down with the head elevated. Sponge with cool water until help arrives. Heat stroke is a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment by a doctor.

Here are some basic things we can do to prevent heat emergencies and make it easier for our bodies to handle the heat and humidity:

- Get a good night of sleep
- Eat moderately on hot days
- Wear loose fitting, lightweight clothing
- Drink plenty of cool water
- Avoid intake of alcohol, drugs, even some prescription drugs may affect your tolerance to heat.

Never ignore the symptoms of heat illness in yourself or a co-worker.

**Get help immediately!**

