

# Tool Box Talk

## Heat-Related Illnesses

As the weather gets warmer, the risk of heat-related illnesses increases. From the least to the most serious, here are 4 forms of heat-related illnesses.

### Heat Rash

Heat rash usually occurs 1-2 days after heavy sweating, due to a blockage of the sweat glands. Symptoms include red or brownish speckles, an itchy or “prickly” feeling and



the area may be slightly swollen.

First aid treatment includes cooling the area with a wet cloth or an ice pack and tapping or patting the area, but don't scratch. Avoid soap

with excessive perfumes and take cool showers until the rash disappears. See a doctor if fevered, swollen lymph glands or the rash lasts longer than 3 days.

### Heat Cramps

These cramps will occur when the body has been sweating for extended periods and has lost nutrients (electrolytes). Symptoms include rigid, tight muscles, muscle weakness and clammy skin. First aid treatment: get out of the heat, consume food or electrolyte drinks, massage the affected



area or apply cold packs or cool wet cloths. See a doctor if the cramp does not release after 15 minutes of cooling and relaxing, or continues to happen.

### Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion usually occurs when a person is in high heat and humidity, which prevents the body from cooling via sweating. Symptoms include excessive sweating; weak, rapid heartbeat; pale, clammy skin; lightheadedness, disorientation, general weakness or fainting. First aid treatment: cool the body with a damp cloth or ice packs on the back of the neck, take small sips of water and relax in a

cool area for up to an hour to prevent heat stroke. Contact EMS if fluids cannot be kept down, body temperature exceeds 39.5°C or there is slurred speech.

### Heat Stroke

Heat stroke occurs due to the body's heat regulation system no longer working. Failure to recognize and immediately treat heat stroke can result in permanent disability or death. Symptoms include hot, dry skin; rapid, shallow breathing; slurred speech or disorientation; body temperature over 40°C or a loss of consciousness.

First aid treatment should occur as soon as possible. Get the person out of the heat, cool them by fanning or putting



them in a cool shower or bath. Apply cold packs to the groin, neck and armpits. Contact EMS and let them know that you suspect heat stroke.

### Prevention

- Drink water or electrolyte drinks every 20 mins
- Skip caffeine or energy drinks
- Eat regular meals or snacks
- Wear light-coloured or loose-fitting clothing
- Plan to do heaviest work early in the day (11 a.m.-3 p.m. is generally the hottest part of the day)
- Take rests out of the sun
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat
- Wear sunscreen of at least 30 SPF (sunburned skin doesn't cool easily)
- Have a large bucket or tub where workers can soak arms or heads

Take care of yourself and watch out for co-workers, especially new workers just getting used to the heat.