



Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is most likely the culprit when a worker experiences an excessive loss of water and salt and is sweating profusely.

Among those most prone to heat exhaustion are employees who work in a hot environment, such as bakeries, laundries or outdoors, who have high blood pressure or who are elderly. Heat exhaustion symptoms include:

- Nausea
- Heavy sweating
- Muscle cramps
- Dizziness, confusion
- Clammy, moist skin
- Pale or flushed complexion
- Fast and shallow breathing
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Slightly elevated body temperature

According to the CDC, from 1999 to 2010, 8,018 heat related deaths were reported in the United States, In 5783 of these deaths, the underlying cause was exposure to excessive heat.

Employees working in hot environments should be trained in first-aid treatment of heat exhaustion.

When workers succumb to heat exhaustion:

- Place them in a cool, shaded or air-conditioned area to rest.
- Help them drink plenty of water or other cool, nonalcoholic, noncaffeinated beverages.
- If possible, have them take a cool shower, bath, or sponge bath.

Myths About Heat Stress

- **Medications and health conditions don't affect one's ability to work safely in the heat** – Health and medication can affect how the body handles working in high temperatures. Workers at risk in high temperatures include those who are obese and/or have diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Medications to control these ailments can affect a body's ability to cool down.
- **Unlike heat exhaustion, there is no sweating with heat stroke** – Workers suffering from heat stroke may continue to produce sweat, as well as to show symptoms of confusion, loss of consciousness, seizures and high body temperature. Heat stroke is life-threatening and must be dealt with immediately: give first-aid treatment and call 911 for medical help.
- **Using salt tablets will restore electrolytes lost to sweating** – Do not use salt tablets unless a doctor approves their use. Workers should drink small amounts of water (1 cup per 15-20 minutes) to maintain good hydration. Eating regular meals and snacks provides enough salt and electrolytes to replace those lost through sweating, as long as enough water is consumed. However, drinking extreme amounts of water is harmful; workers should generally not drink more than 12 quarts (48 cups) in a 24-hour period.
- **Taking a work break in an air-conditioned area will ruin workers' acclimatization** – Air-conditioned break areas offer an effective way to cool down.

Source: CDC, NIOSH

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