

Avoiding Heat-Related Illness

Hot working conditions can endanger the health of agricultural workers. This can pose problems if:

- The temperature and/or humidity levels rise to unsafe levels.
- The worker does not adjust to the hot environment.
- The worker does not drink enough water.
- The worker does not take rest breaks.
- The worker drinks beverages with alcohol or caffeine.

Prepare For Heat Exposure

Heat exposure can harm workers who do not prepare properly. It can take five to seven working days for individuals to adjust to hot weather. To minimize heat-related illnesses, watch for the onset of dehydration. It can occur quickly if lost fluids are not replenished. Review the list of symptoms and treatments (see below).

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer:

- Supply water for workers, and encourage them to drink a sufficient amount.
- Provide a shaded area for workers to rest during breaks.
- On abnormally hot and humid days, try to limit work to the cooler early morning or evening hours, or postpone work altogether.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of heat-related illnesses.
- Train supervisors to recognize the potential effects of heat exposure and to monitor workers closely throughout the day.
- Train workers on the dangers of heat-related illnesses, especially new employees not acclimated to the heat.

Employee:

- Drink water frequently to replenish lost fluids.
- Avoid beverages with alcohol or caffeine; they can increase dehydration.

- Take sufficient rest breaks in a shady or cool area, especially if you are not acclimated to the heat.
- Learn to recognize symptoms of heat-related illnesses.
- Wear a hat, and white or light-color cotton clothing

Symptoms	Treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spasms in muscles ("heat cramps"). • Excessive sweating. • Dizziness or weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest in the shade. • Drink water.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin becomes cold and pale. • Nausea and headache. • Heart rate increases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest in the shade. • Drink water. • May need medical attention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweating stops. • Hot, dry skin. • Deep, rapid breathing. • Headache and nausea. • Confusion • Vomiting. • Loss of consciousness. • Convulsions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 911 for medical help immediately! • Rest in the shade. • Only give fluids if the employee is conscious.

(**Note:** This is only a partial list of common symptoms and treatments for heat-related illnesses).

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