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Heat Stress & Maintaing Hydration

Heat stress occurs when the total heat load on the body exceeds the body's capacity to cool itself. Heat stress can result in fatigue, skin rashes, and decreased mental alertness which can be a contributor to poor judgment and accidents. Over-exposure to heat can cause cramps, nausea, headache, fainting, and, in extreme cases, even cause death. Heat stroke is a very serious medical condition in which the body's system of regulating its temperature has failed. It often results in death, unless treated immediately.

HYDRATION

Drink water early, drink water often throughout the day -- and drink even if you do not "feel" thirsty. Taking in small amounts of water at regular intervals (about 1 cup every 20 minutes) is much more effective in fighting heat stress than gulping down large amounts of liquid after longer work intervals. Also, avoid diuretics like cola, tea and coffee as these tend to cause us to lose fluid. **Proper hydration is 1 Liter of water be drank for every hour of strenous activity.** (Ex: 8 hours of work=8 Liters of water per day)

SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STRESS:

- **Red blotchy skin**
- **Muscle cramps**
- **Impaired motor performance**
- **Excessive sweating**
- **Headaches**
- **Nausea/ Vomiting**

** If you experience any of the symptoms above, stop, take a break, hydrate yourself and get to a shaded area. Keep an eye out for coworkers as well.

Prevention-

Take frequent breaks, stay hydrated. Remember the 2 to 1 ratio; two bottles of water for every one bottle of electrolyte replacement. Avoid caffeine products, and be aware of medications you may take (prescription and over the counter). Some medication can reduce the capacity of the body to tolerate heat.

Prevention of heat stress is an individual responsibility. Only through careful consideration of this serious hazard and taking definitive steps to manage the potentially dangerous effects of heat stress can we safely perform work in these days of summer.



SAFETY ALERT