

Treating Heat-Related Illness

Summer is the season for working and playing outdoors in Colorado. It is also the time to emphasize the importance of preventing and treating heat-related illness. The following are just a few heat related safety tips:

Stay hydrated throughout the day by drinking water steadily; do not wait until you are thirsty.

Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which cause us to lose water more rapidly.

Take frequent breaks in the shade or indoors in an air-conditioned space.

Wear loose fitting, lightly colored and lightweight clothes.

Check on friends and neighbors.

Minimize use of heat-generating appliances like stoves or ovens.

Do not exercise outdoors. If you must exercise outdoors, only exercise in the early morning hours, before 8 a.m.

Take cool showers or baths to cool down.

Check the local news and other outlets for important safety information regarding the weather.

When overheating does occur, it's important to **recognize the signs** and symptoms of heat-related illness. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) identifies four stages of heat-related illness: heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Heat Rash - Heat Rash is an irritation to the skin caused by sweat buildup. While common, heat rash is usually treatable by getting individuals into a cool environment with good ventilation.

Heat Cramps - Sweating causes a loss of body salts and fluids, which can lead to heat cramps. An individual suffering from muscle spasms or pain due to the heat should move to a cool area, rest and hydrate.

Heat Exhaustion - If the body loses too much water and salt, heat exhaustion may result. Signs of heat exhaustion include cool, moist skin, nausea, headache, dizziness, weakness and rapid pulse. Workers should immediately lie down in a cool area, drink lots of water and apply cold compresses or ice packs if available. If signs of heat exhaustion do not abate or worsen, the individual should go to the emergency room.

Heat Stroke is a medical emergency. If an individual suddenly stops sweating and feels hot to the touch, becomes confused, faints or has

seizures, call 911 immediately. Place the worker in a cool, shady area, loosen and moisten clothing, apply ice or cold compress; get the individual to drink water if conscious.

To keep your family safe during the summer please remember that it is never safe to leave a toddler, disabled person or pet locked in a parked vehicle. If you have a toddler or young children in your household or neighborhood, lock your cars, even in your own driveway. Kids play in cars or wander outside and get into a car and can die in 10 minutes.

Make sure to **give pets plenty of fresh, clean water** and a shady place to get out of the sun.

Symptoms of overheating in pets include excessive panting or difficulty breathing, increased heart and respiratory rate, drooling, mild weakness, stupor or even collapse. Hydrate and cool them as quickly as possible.

Have a safe and enjoyable July!