Safety Alert – Heat Stress

With temperatures well into the 90’s this week, and more than likely the remainder of the summer, it’s important to work together to prevent heat-related illness. Understanding how to recognize heat-related illness and how to respond to it is critical. Most importantly, how to prevent this problem is first and foremost. Many of us are outdoors a great part of the day conducting work or just walking across campus to get to class or a meeting. Here is a guide to preventing, recognizing, and responding to heat-related illness.

Most heat-related illness can be prevented, or the risk of developing them can be reduced by following some basic principles, such as:

- Water-Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink water or an electrolyte replacement beverage (Gatorade, Sqincher, etc…). A good rule of thumb is to drink 4 cups of water every hour or a cup every 15 minutes.
  - Remember: Caffeine and alcohol are diuretics – they strip the body of fluids. If you drink coffee in the morning and/or alcohol, last night, you MUST replenish the body by drinking several cups of water before you start your day.
- Rest-Rest breaks help your body recover and cool down.
- Shade- Resting in the shade or air-conditioning helps you to cool down. Take more rest breaks during the hottest time of the day. Set up tents to create shade in outdoor working activities.
- Clothing- When working outside for extended periods, wear hats and light colored clothing.
- Acclimatization- Watch out for new employees conducting outdoor work. It usually takes about 14 days to become acclimated to temperature extremes.
- Be prepared for an Emergency-Know the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and respond with confidence (see the table below).

The chart below shows symptoms and first aid measures to take if a person shows signs of a heat-related illness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>First Aid*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heat stroke</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Call 911 from an office phone or 7-2200 from a cell phone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fainting</td>
<td>While waiting for help to arrive:</td>
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<td>Seizures</td>
<td>- Place person in shady, cool area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not sweating or red, hot, dry skin</td>
<td>- Loosen clothing, remove outer clothing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very high body temperature</td>
<td>- Fan air on person; apply cold packs in armpits</td>
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<td>- Wet person with cool water; apply ice packs, cool compresses, or ice if available</td>
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<td>- Provide fluids (preferably water) as soon as possible</td>
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<td>- Stay with person until help arrives</td>
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</table>
**Heat exhaustion**

- Cool, moist skin
- Heavy sweating
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Light headedness
- Weakness
- Thirst
- Irritability
- Fast heart beat

- Have person sit or lie down in a cool, shady area
- Give person plenty of water or other cool beverages to drink
- Cool person with cold compresses/ice packs
- Call Police & Public Safety (*7-2200 from a cell phone or 911 from office phone*) or accompany person to the Student Health Center if signs or symptoms worsen or do not improve within 60 minutes.

* Remember, if you are not a medical professional; use this information as a guide only to help workers in need.

For more information about heat-stress for training and educational purposes, reference the Heat Stress Fact Sheet on the Environmental Health and Safety website.