

# ***Its Summer Again!***

It's summer and the days of 95 degree temperatures and 95% humidity are back. We can't do anything about the weather, but we can work and play smarter when it's hot to avoid getting sick.

First let's review the types of heat-related illnesses:

- **Sunburn.** Not only are sunburns painful at the time, exposure to too much sun could lead to skin cancer.
- **Heat Rash.** Sometimes called prickly heat, the best way to avoid this is to bathe regularly and keep your skin clean and dry.
- **Heat Cramps.** Painful cramps, often in the legs, arms or stomach, heat cramps happen when you are sweating heavily and are not getting enough of the minerals your body needs to replace the minerals lost in sweat. The symptoms of heat cramps may not show up until after work. Avoid heat cramps by drinking plenty of fluids and eating a balanced diet.
- **Heat Exhaustion.** Symptoms include heavy sweating, thirst, clammy and pale skin, fatigue, weakness and loss of coordination. A person with heat exhaustion may also be anxious, faint, confused, have a headache, nausea or vomiting and loss of appetite. Heat exhaustion can be serious. Move the person to a cool area and encourage them to drink water to prevent dehydration. They may also need medical attention. Someone with heat exhaustion should not operate machinery, drive or do anything strenuous until they have recovered.
- **Heat Stroke.** Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. The body has lost the ability to cool itself. Death can quickly result if not treated promptly. Usually the most striking symptom of heat stroke is the absence of sweating. The skin is red, dry and hot. The pulse is rapid. The person may complain of headaches, dizziness or nausea and may appear confused or delirious. Fainting, seizures or collapse may occur. A person in heat stroke needs immediate medical attention at an emergency room or hospital. While help is on the way, move the person to the coolest spot nearby and try to cool their body. They can be immersed in water, but don't place them in ice water. Don't give them anything to drink since they may lose consciousness.

We can't do much about the hot weather except wait for fall, but there are some things you can do to help reduce the likelihood that you will have a heat-related illness:

- Gradually get used to working in the heat. The more you are in the heat, the better your body is able to handle it. It takes about two weeks for your body to adapt to the hot conditions, but if you are away for as little as a week (on vacation, for example) your body loses this ability and you will have to get used to the heat again.
- Dress appropriately. Light colored, loose clothing (that won't get caught in machinery) is better than going bare skinned.
- Wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn.
- Wear a hat.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. Make sure you have ample cool, clean water on the job. Your body needs water before you feel thirsty. Water, fruit juice or sports drinks are best. Sodas, coffee and tea all contain caffeine and should not be your main source of fluids.
- Limit your intake of alcohol. Alcohol causes dehydration and can be a big contributor to the more serious heat-related illnesses.
- Eat well-balanced meals. You need to make sure your body's stores of vitamins and minerals don't get depleted. Fresh fruits and vegetables contain needed nutrients plus water.
- Get plenty of rest. We all have lots of things going on during the summer, but when we don't get enough rest that puts additional stress on our bodies.
- Take frequent breaks in the shade or a cooler area. These breaks help reduce the heat load on your body.
- Plan your work to take advantage of cooler morning hours. Move work to shaded areas when possible.
- Keep an eye on new hands who aren't used to the heat and co-workers who have health conditions that may make them more susceptible to heat-related illnesses. If someone looks like they are having heat exhaustion or a heat stroke take action fast to get them to a cool area and get medical attention.

**Take care of yourself and your coworkers this summer and you'll have it Made In The Shade.**