

June 9, 2016

Working in the Heat

No surprise....**the hot weather is coming!!!** This means that the risk of having a heat related illness such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion or worse – heat stroke increases substantially. Everyone working outside needs to remember to drink plenty of water (along with **some** electrolyte fortified drinks such as Gatorade, Powerade, etc.) in order to minimize the risk of getting a heat related illness. We have talked about this before but it is critical that we remember the following tips:

Tips to Remember:

Always drink more cool water than any other type of liquid

Drink very little, if any, caffeinated drinks and drinks with lots of sugar. They do not quench the thirst. Most of the time they just make you thirstier and can even promote dehydration.

Workers who are diabetic need to watch how much Gatorade they drink. Water should be the major liquid taken.

Take plenty of water breaks and stay hydrated (generally 1 cup of water every 15-20 minutes...even if you may not be thirsty) and periodically try to cool down for a few minutes in a shaded area.

Wear light colored and loose fitting clothes

Avoid eating large meals before and during your time working in the heat

Watch each other to detect early signs/symptoms of heat illness (see below).

Signs of heat related illnesses:

Heat Exhaustion (most people have most of these symptoms):

Headaches, dizziness/light headedness, weakness, mood changes (irritable or confused/can't think straight), nauseated, vomiting, fainting/passing out and pale clammy skin.

Heat Stroke (again...most people have most of the following symptoms):

Dry pale skin (no sweating), hot red skin (looks like sunburn), mood changes, seizures/fits, and collapses/passes out (will not respond to touch or voice)

First Aid:

Heat Exhaustion:

Move person to a cool shaded area to rest. If dizzy, lay the person on their back with feet raised 6-8 inches. If nauseated, lay the person on their side. Loosen clothing and remove any heavy clothing. Have the person drink some cool water if they are not feeling sick. Try to cool them by fanning them and/or a cool mist of water or wet cloth. If not feeling better in a few minutes call 911 for emergency help.

Heat Stroke:

Call 911 for EMS. Do all of the above actions (for heat exhaustion) plus (if available) put ice packs under the arm pits on the groin area. If the person is having seizures move any objects away from them so that they can not hurt themselves by striking the objects. Time is of the essence with heat stroke victims. Always call EMS if the symptoms are present and/or you believe the victim has been overcome with heat stroke.

Remember: Heat related illnesses should always be taken very seriously. Heat exhaustion can very easily become heat stroke and heat stroke is a KILLER!