

Stream Source Health & Safety Bulletin

Staying safe at your workplace in hot weather



July 2024



It's July and rising temperatures put significant stress on your body's cooling system. Prolonged exposure to, and working in, a hot environment can cause heat illnesses and compound heat sensitive diseases.

Hot weather conditions can be especially dangerous if you are suffering from pre-existing conditions such as breathing difficulties, heart conditions, hypertension, Parkinson's disease etc. According to [Health Canada](#), older adults, individuals with chronic illnesses and people who work outdoors are most vulnerable to heat-related health effects.

If you are taking medications or have a health condition, it is important to check with your doctor if rising temperatures can increase your health risk and follow their recommendations, especially if you work outside.

According to Statistics Canada July 2023 report, between 0.2% and 0.7% of all deaths from 1986 to 2009 have been attributed to heat. More recently, approximately 280 deaths occurred during the 2010 Quebec heat wave, and 619 deaths occurred in British Columbia during the 2021 heat dome in Western North America.

Effects of heat on the body:

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety lists increased irritability, loss of concentration and ability to perform mental tasks and loss of ability to do skilled or heavy work, as the first symptoms one can begin to experience due to extreme temperatures. It is imperative to note that these symptoms can lead to more serious heat illnesses and potentially increase the risk of sickness and injury at work.

Here are some common effects of **heat exposure**, as described by Health Canada:

1. High body temperature
2. Confusion and lack of coordination
3. Skin rash
4. Muscle cramps
5. Dizziness or fainting
6. Nausea or vomiting
7. Heavy sweating
8. Headache
9. Rapid breathing and heartbeat
10. Extreme thirst

In extreme cases prolonged heat exposure can lead to individuals experiencing heat stroke. **High body temperature, confusion, lack of coordination, fainting, dizziness, and hot, red skin without sweat** are common symptoms of **heat stroke**.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. CALL 911 if you are experiencing symptoms of high heat!

According to [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#), the effects of exposure to high temperatures can be different for different people. A person's general health influences how well they adapt to hot or cold temperatures. However, taking precautions when stepping outside or working in hot temperatures can help to prevent or at least minimize the harmful effects of heat.

Prevention is better than cure:

In general, it is best to practice caution when you are anticipating working outdoors in high temperatures. Here are some things to help you prepare before you head outside in high temperatures:

Know the **weather**:

Download a reliable weather app and check weather conditions. Ideally, be aware of the temperature highs and lows that are likely to occur throughout the day. That way you can be prepared for weather changes and be comfortable throughout the day.

Keep **hydrated**:

It is extremely important to stay hydrated in high temperatures. Significant water loss from the body during hot weather in the form of perspiration needs to be replenished. Always carry a water bottle when you are stepping out, even if it is for a short duration. Consume water rich fruits and vegetables such as watermelon, cucumbers etc.

Monitor your **diet**:

Your diet plays an important role in making sure you feel comfortable in high temperatures. Add yogurt, low sugar snacks and seasonal produce to your diet. Choose seasonal fruits like mangoes, oranges, berries, and lemons that are packed with minerals and antioxidants.

Avoid deep-fried foods, processed snacks, and sugary drinks as they can burden your digestive system and contribute to dehydration.

Stay **cool**:

Wear loose light-coloured clothing. Choose heat-friendly, breathable fabrics such as cotton, linen, chambray etc., to make sure you are comfortable in warm temperatures. Use a head covering, sunglasses and sunscreen to prevent damage from prolonged sun exposure.

Take regular **breaks**:

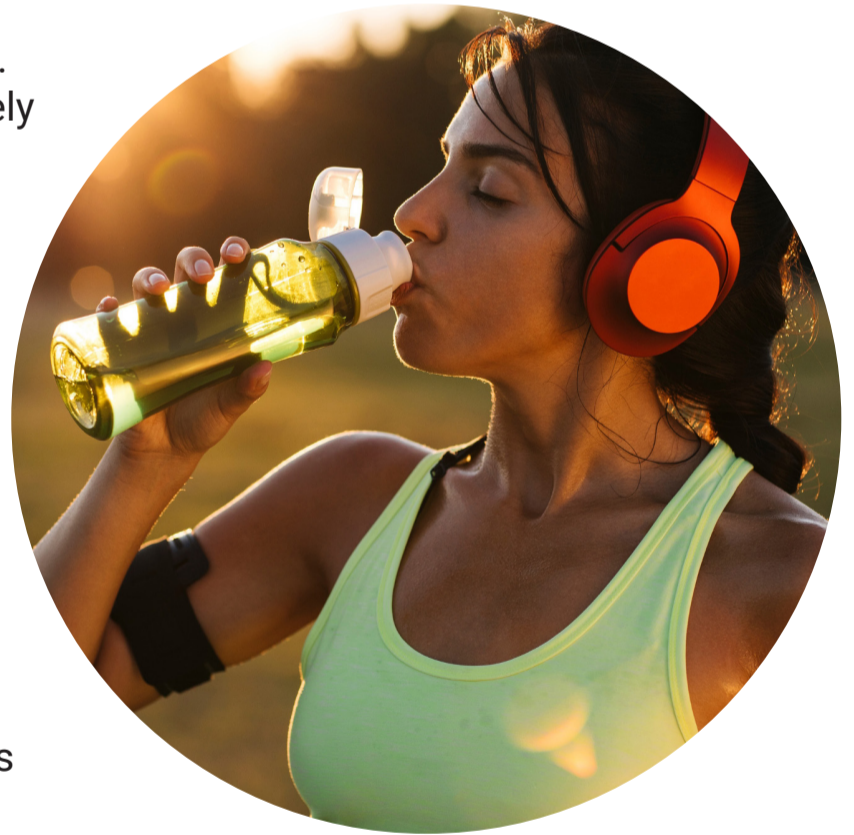
Take regular breaks if you are working outdoors. Choose a well-ventilated and cooler spot such as shade under a tree to step away from the direct sunlight.

Listen to your **body**:

One of the most crucial ways to prevent heat-related illnesses is to listen to your body. If you are feeling discomfort, even at slightly higher temperatures, use caution and seek medical attention. It doesn't matter if your co-workers seem comfortable in the same temperature.

You can prevent illnesses resulting from high temperatures. Seek immediate medical help if you are experiencing any heat-related symptoms. If you have a pre-existing health condition, it is important to let your supervisor know in advance so your work can be adjusted to make sure you can work in a comfortable and safe environment.

Don't forget to look out for your co-workers, the elderly, and children. Stay informed with [further education](#) on weather-related health risks.



Cool heads prevent heat stress.

Have questions regarding this bulletin, or workplace health and safety?

Contact our operating partner at: safety@agilus.ca

