

FIRST AID FACT SHEET

You have a duty to provide first aid equipment and facilities, and access to trained first aid officers, for sick or injured workers. Heat-related illness is progressive. If the worker is not treated or remains in a hot environment, it can be fatal.

Note on pre-existing medical conditions and medications. Previous heat-related illness, certain medications and medical conditions can make a worker more susceptible to heat related illness and can affect how the worker can be treated. You should alert workers to this risk and monitor them closely as far as is reasonably practicable.

Dehydration – Seek medical advice if symptoms don't improve or are severe

Symptoms

- Mild to severe thirst (remember that thirst is satisfied before fluid loss is fully replaced).
- Dry lips and tongue.
- Slowed mental function and lowered performance.
- Reduced or dark urine output.

First aid for dehydration

- Drink water. Avoid caffeinated, carbonated and alcoholic drinks, and salt tablets.
- Loosen tight clothing and remove unnecessary clothing, including PPE.
- In cases of extreme heat or dehydration, replace electrolytes.

Heat rash – Seek medical advice if symptoms don't improve

Symptoms

- Itchy rash with small raised red spots on the face, neck, back, chest or thighs.

First aid for heat rash

- Move to a cooler, less humid environment.
- Keep the affected area dry and remove unnecessary clothing, including PPE.
- Apply a cold compress.

Heat cramps – Seek medical advice if symptoms don't improve

Symptoms

- Painful and often incapacitating cramps in muscles, particularly when undertaking demanding physical work.

First aid for heat cramps

- Stop activity and rest quietly in a cool place until recovered.
- Drink an electrolyte solution.

Fainting – Seek medical advice

Symptoms

- Fainting (heat syncope) can occur while standing or rising from a sitting position.

First aid for fainting

- Lie the worker flat immediately with their legs slightly raised.
- Do not raise the head.
- Treat as for heat stroke and follow medical advice.

Heat stroke – Call an ambulance immediately

Symptoms (not all will be present)

- Dehydration, thirst, and reduced or dark urine output.
- Sweating.
- The person stops sweating.
- Skin can be pink, warm and dry, or cool and blue.
- High body temperature above 39 degrees Celsius.
- Weakness or fatigue.
- Cramps.
- Pounding, rapid pulse.
- Headache, dizziness and visual disturbances.
- Muscle cramps.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Clumsiness or slower reaction times.
- Disorientation or impaired judgement.
- Tingling or numbness in fingers or toes.
- Rapid or short breathing.
- Rapid weak pulse or heart palpitations.
- Vomiting or an unwillingness to drink.
- Irritability and mental confusion.
- Collapse, seizures and unconsciousness.
- Cardiac arrest. Can be characterised by unconsciousness, stopped breathing and no pulse

First aid for heat stroke

Call 000 and evacuate by ambulance immediately.

Ensure that the ambulance is updated if the worker experiences seizures or becomes unconscious.

Follow all directions given by the ambulance operator.

If cardiac arrest occurs follow DRSABCD action plan.

While waiting for the ambulance:

Move the worker to a cool place with circulating air.

Remove unnecessary clothing, including PPE.

Loosen tight clothing.

If practicable and safe to do, immersion in a bath of cold water is the most effective means for cooling a person.

Immerse the worker (whole-body from the neck down) in a bath of cold water (preferably 1–7°) for 15 minutes.

Continuously observe the worker to ensure an open airway in case of any change in their level of consciousness.

If a cold bath is not available, or is not reasonably practicable or safe to use, use a combination of the following as available: Cool the worker by splashing cool or cold water on their skin or sponging their skin with a damp cloth.

Make a wind tunnel by suspending sheets around, not on, the worker's body. Use a fan to direct gentle airflow over the worker's body.

Apply cold packs or wrapped ice to the worker's neck, groin and armpits. If the worker is fully conscious sit them up to facilitate drinking and provide cool fluid to drink.

Provide an electrolyte solution with sugar. Do not attempt to give oral fluid if the worker is not fully conscious.

Shivering is an automatic muscular reaction which warms the body. It will make the body temperature rise even further.

If the worker starts shivering, stop cooling immediately and cover them until they stop. Once they have stopped recommence first aid treatment.