

## **Agriculture – Working In Hot Weather**

Exposure to heat or cold can lead to serious illness. Factors such as physical activity, clothing, wind, humidity, working and living conditions, age and health influence if a person will get ill. There are several ways to lessen the chances of succumbing to exposure.

### ***Exposure to Heat and Sun***

Before working in hot temperatures for a long time, gradually spend more time each day in the heat. This will help to avoid heat stress. It takes four to seven days to get acclimated to unusual heat. Always drink plenty of cool water when working in the heat. The body can lose as much as three gallons of water a day in hot weather. Wear hats and sunglasses to help stay cool. Take frequent breaks in a cool place. Wear loose clothing that allows the skin to breathe. Cotton is an excellent fabric to wear in the summer.

### ***Skin Protection***

Protect your skin from the sun. Keep as much of it covered with clothing as possible. Wearing long-sleeved shirts will help. Skin cancer is known to be common among farm workers. It can be prevented or delayed with the use of sun screen or sun block on unprotected skin. Physicians recommend a sun block with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Reapply sun block regularly if perspiring heavily or swimming. Make sure to apply sun block to hands, face (especially nose) and ears. Wash hands after applying so you do not wipe your eyes with it on. Conduct periodic self-examination to aid in early recognition of new or developing lesions.

### ***Keeping Cool***

Use shaded areas, fans or ventilation systems whenever possible. A work area or vehicle can be shaded by a tarp or canopy. You can also use fans, awnings or air conditioners.

### ***Heat-Related Illnesses and Treatments***

Overexposure to heat can cause illnesses called heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. They're all serious and need to be treated immediately. In all three cases, get the person out of the sun and into the shade as quickly as possible.

**Heat cramps** are the least severe of the three heat-related illnesses. They are often the first signal that the body is having trouble with the heat. Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms that usually occur in the legs and abdomen. If a person has heat cramps, take them to a cool place, loosen clothing, and give cool water or a commercial sports drink. Allow the person to drink about one glass of liquid every 15 minutes. With rest and fluids, the person should recover quickly and be able to resume activity. Keep the person drinking fluids and watch for any further signs of heat-related illness.

**Heat exhaustion** is more serious than heat cramps. Symptoms include cool, moist, pale or flushed skin, headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness and exhaustion. As with heat cramps, get the person to a cool place and loosen the victim's clothing. Give plenty of fluids to a heat exhaustion victim. Apply cool, wet compresses to cool the person.

**Heat stroke** is the most severe heat condition. It develops when the body systems become overwhelmed by heat and begin to stop functioning. Heat stroke is a serious medical emergency. The signals include red, hot, dry skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Work to cool the person, as in the other two heat-related illness, but also call for medical help.

Refusing water, vomiting and changes in consciousness indicate the person's condition is worsening. Get medical attention immediately. If the person vomits, do not give any more fluids and put him on his side. This prevents the possibility of the person choking on his vomit. Watch for breathing problems and keep the victim lying down. Cool the body as much as possible. Place cool, wet cloths or ice packs on the victim's wrists, ankles, on the groin area, armpits and neck to cool the large blood vessels. Do not apply rubbing alcohol.