

For Your Safety: It's Heating Up!

The weather is starting to get hot in most parts of the country. Summer means longer days, more sunshine and higher temperatures. It also can mean exposure to sunburn, dehydration, and heat stroke. Knowing the symptoms of sunburn and heat stroke and how to prevent them will make your summer safer and more comfortable both on and off the job.

Sunburn

What is it? Sunburn results from over-exposure to the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun. While the symptoms are usually temporary (such as red skin that is painful to the touch), the resulting skin damage can be permanent and can have serious long-term health effects, including skin cancer.

Preventing Sunburn: Besides staying out of the sun the best way to prevent sunburn is to protect the skin by covering it with clothing or using a sun block cream. The manufacturers of sun block provide a protection rating (SPF number) on the side of the bottle. The higher the SPF number, the greater protection the product offers. To be effective, though, sunblock needs to be reapplied several times a day. *Treating Sunburn:* Try taking a cool shower or place wet, cold wash cloths on the burn for 10 to 15 minutes, several times a day. Apply a soothing lotion to the skin. Aloe gel is a common household remedy for sunburns. An over-the-counter pain medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be helpful. (When in doubt, consult a physician before taking any medication.) DO NOT apply petroleum jelly, benzocaine, lidocaine, or butter to the sunburn. They make the symptoms worse and can prevent healing.

Heat Stroke

What is it? Heat Stroke is a major overheating of the body. It can cause a sudden and complete breakdown. Severe cases can lead to brain damage or death.

Preventing Heat Stroke: Take it easy the first few days when high heat and humidity hits. Give your body a chance to acclimate itself. Drink lots of water and drink before you are thirsty. Take short breaks between physically demanding tasks. Avoid alcohol as it makes it harder for your body to keep cool. If you're working in the heat and you begin to feel ill, take a water break and seek shade.

Symptoms of Heat Stroke: The body stops sweating the skin becomes hot and dry. The heart rate increases. The person becomes confused, feels chilled, nauseated or dizzy.

Treating Heat Stroke: This is a medical emergency. Call for medical attention immediately. Move the victim to a cooler.

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