

# HEAT STRESS: THE BASICS...

## What is Heat Stress?

Heat stress is the overall effect of heat on your body.

**It is caused by the combination of:**

- The heat your body is generating;
- Environmental factors (air temperature, humidity, air movement and radiant heat); and
- Clothing that may trap heat to your body.

## Why is this a workplace safety issue?

You may experience heat stress at work when a number of conditions come together:

1. Working in hot, humid conditions;
2. Strenuous activity;
3. Not drinking enough water to stay hydrated;
4. Fatigue; and
5. Personal health issues.

If your body cannot cool itself (evaporation of sweat), you may suffer some form of heat stress illness.

Your employer should assess the hazards in your workplace, including heat stress AND have a plan for addressing them.

## Types of Heat Stress

**Heat Rash** - the most common problem in hot work environments. Appears as a red rash usually where constricting clothing traps heat to the body.



**Heat Cramps** - caused by performing hard physical labour in a hot environment. These cramps have been attributed to an electrolyte imbalance caused by sweating.



**Fainting** - the brain does not receive enough oxygen because blood pools in the extremities. As a result, the exposed individual may lose consciousness.



**Heat Exhaustion** - usually caused by a lack of acclimatization. Signs include impaired performance of skilled sensorimotor, mental, or vigilance jobs.



**Heat Stroke** - the body's system of temperature regulation fails and the body temperature rises to critical levels.



Discuss the conditions at your workplace that may come together to create a potential heat stress hazard?

