

How to stay cool during hot weather

As the weather starts to get warmer, there is a likelihood we will feel hot at work, especially if you are wearing PPE to protect against COVID-19 or working from home with no air conditioning. If we get too hot for a long period of time without trying to cool down, this can increase the likelihood of heat stress and overheating.

Heat stress occurs when our body's means of controlling its internal temperature starts to fail. Air temperature, work rate, humidity and work clothing are all factors which can cause heat stress.

So what can you do to prevent this from happening?

Know the signs

- Make yourself aware of the signs and symptoms of heat stress.
- These include headache, dry mouth, thirst, loss of appetite and feeling sick, urinating infrequently, low concentration, dizziness, fainting, muscle cramps in arms, legs and stomach, excessive sweating, pale and clammy skin, fast breathing/pulse, and a temperature of 38°C or higher.

Stay hydrated



- If you are feeling thirsty, you are starting to become dehydrated.
- Take regular sips of water.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol as these will promote dehydration.
- Checking your urine is a good indicator – if it's dark or strong smelling, you need to drink more water.

Take regular breaks

- Find somewhere as cool as possible.
- Don't wait until you begin to feel unwell to take a break.
- Try to stay cool between shifts to allow your body to recover.

Keep rooms cool

- Close blinds/curtains in rooms that face the sun to keep indoor spaces cooler.
- Open windows on the side of the building in the shade and close those in direct sunlight. This can help keep the building cooler.
- If you have air conditioning on, keep the windows closed so the cold air can circulate properly to keep the room cool.

Wash your hands with cold water



- When you're washing your hands, rinse your wrists with cold water to cool down your blood.

Eat well

- Instead of eating big hot foods, try lighter, and more frequent small meals or snacks containing cold fruit or low-fat dairy products.

Look out for each other



- Start a buddy system to look out for signs of heat stress in one another.
- If you notice someone has heat stress/exhaustion, follow these 5 steps:
 1. Move them to a cool place.
 2. Get them to lie down and raise their feet slightly.
 3. Get them to drink plenty of water (sports or rehydration drinks are OK).
 4. Cool their skin – spray or sponge them with cool water, fan them, place cold packs around the armpits or neck.
 5. Stay with them until they're better.

They should start to cool down and feel better within 30 minutes. If they do not cool down and recover during this 30 minute period, seek medical assistance.