

Sun Exposure and Heat Extremes

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 675 people die from complications related to extreme heat each year in the United States – more than tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, lightning or any other weather event combined.

Anyone in a hot environment should frequently drink cool water in small amounts--one cup every 20 minutes. Employers should make water available. Avoid alcohol, coffee, tea and caffeinated soft drinks, which cause dehydration.

Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes, and change clothing if it gets completely saturated. Use sunscreen and wear a hat when working outdoors to avoid sunburn.

Good ventilation, as well as spot cooling in work areas of high heat production is encouraged. Good airflow increases evaporation of sweat, which cools the skin.

Be alert to early signs of heat-related illness. Stop and take a rest break.

Everyone who is in a hot environment should learn to spot the signs of heat stroke, which can be fatal. Get medical attention immediately if someone has one or more of the following symptoms: diminished or absent perspiration, hot and dry skin, increased body temperature, delirium, convulsions, seizures, rapid pulse, muscle weakness, headaches, mental confusion, dizziness, extreme fatigue, nausea/vomiting, incoherent speech progressing to coma, medical care is urgently needed.

Lack of acclimatization, age, obesity, poor conditioning, pregnancy, inadequate rest, previous heat injuries, certain medical conditions such as diabetes, and medications are some factors that increase susceptibility to heat stress.

Skin Cancer

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. The amount of damage from UV exposure depends on the strength of the light, the length of exposure, and whether the skin is protected. *There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans.*

Sun exposure at any age can cause skin cancer. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily or spend a lot of time outdoors.

Self-Examination

It is important to examine your body monthly because skin cancers detected early can almost always be cured. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape, or color during a period of 1 month to 2 years.

Skin cancers often take the following forms:

- Pale, wax-like, pearly nodules.
- Red, scaly, sharply outlined patches.
- Sores that do not heal.
- Small, mole-like growths - melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

If you find such unusual skin changes, see a health care professional immediately.

Block Out UV Rays

- Cover up, wear tightly-woven clothing that blocks out light. Try this test: Place your hand between a single layer of the clothing and a light source. If you can see your hand through the fabric, the garment offers little protection.
- Use sunscreen, a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 blocks 93 percent of UV rays. Be sure to follow application directions on the bottle.
- Wear a hat. A wide brim hat (not a baseball cap) is ideal because it protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- Wear UV absorbent shades. Sunglasses do not have to be expensive, but they should block 99 to 100 percent of UV radiation.
- Limit sun exposure, UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. If you're unsure about the sun's intensity, take the shadow test: If your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are the day's strongest.