

## Heat Stress – how to protect yourself



Although the Great British summer usually leaves something to be desired, we do enjoy spells of hot, sunny days.

Exposure to excessive heat can cause a range of health issues, and this can affect both outdoor workers and indoor workers equally.

### What is heat stress?

Heat stress happens when the body's way of controlling its internal temperature starts to fail. Symptoms can include an inability to concentrate, muscle cramps, heat rash and severe thirst. It can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, which is potentially fatal.

In addition, exposure to excessive heat can result in lethargy, poor decision-making, sweaty palms, fogged-up safety glasses and dizziness – all of which can increase the risk of injuries

### Who is affected?

Heat stress can affect those working in hot temperatures outdoors such as construction workers, or even those working in hot environments indoors for example in a manufacturing facility.

### How to reduce the risk?

#### Employers can reduce the risk to workers by:

- Monitoring local weather conditions and planning work in cooler parts of the day.
- Providing access to cool drinking water and providing regular breaks.
- Implementing mechanical means such as air conditioning where possible.
- Implementing a buddy system where workers look after each other.
- Specialised PPE.

#### You can reduce the risk to yourself by:

- Take time to acclimatise to your working environment.
- Work in the shade if possible.
- Wear loose-fitting light-coloured clothing.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Take regular breaks in shaded areas.
- Wear sunscreen when working outside and ensure it is regularly applied.
- Look out for your colleagues.

You must follow the control measures identified by your employer and take your time when working in hot environments.

If you begin to feel unwell or a colleague does, It is vital to ensure that you follow the emergency reporting procedures your employer has adopted to ensure that the right attention and treatment is given.

