

# WHS Hot Weather Procedures



## Policy reference

OHS & Injury Management Policy

Risk Management Policy

## Related documents

Heat Stroke Fact Sheet

Caring in Our Community Handbook

Volunteer Handbook

First Aid Procedures

## Definition

“Staff”            Paid employees and volunteers

## Procedures

The procedure has been developed to ensure that all staff who are required to work outdoors are protected from the potentially harmful effects of the sun’s exposure. It is recommended that any staff who undertakes work outdoors adhere to the following, (even if not in very hot conditions).

- **SPF 30+** sun protection cream (which is supplied by the Hut) Sunscreen should be reapplied regularly according to the directions on the product's packaging
- **Suitable clothing** – that provides maximum comfort and protection for the wearer
- **Hats** - broad-brimmed hats (with a brim of at least eight to 10 centimetres) or legionnaire-style hats are the most suitable
- **Sunglasses** - that provide adequate UV protection should be worn.

Staff responsible for activities held outdoors in hot conditions (eg walking groups, gardening):

- Must be aware of the symptoms of heat stress (see attached “Heat Stroke Fact Sheet”)
- Will encourage participants to wear suitable hats and clothing and to use sun screen and be responsible for checking on the condition of those involved in the activity and that they have access to cool drinking water
- When it is necessary for staff to be working in the sun, The Hut will provide shelter where feasible.

## **What Steps can be taken to minimise the risk of illness due to heat**

- Adjusting programs to match the conditions. Participants should be provided with the opportunity to rest.
- Adequate water intake assist in body temperature control. Carbohydrate and electrolytes in sports drinks can assist.
- Extra caution needs to be taken during unseasonable heat waves or during unusually hot or humid weather.

## **Other Considerations**

- If you have recently experienced high temperatures from infection, diarrhoea or vomiting you should NOT take part in strenuous exercise. People over 65, or who suffer from a variety of medical conditions, or who are taking medication or who are pregnant may experience difficulties exercising in the heat. Examples include asthma, diabetes, heart conditions, epilepsy, overweight or obesity. Medication may also include those purchased over the counter. If in doubt ask your pharmacist or doctor.

## **Where staff are required to work in a hot environment**

- Staff must be aware of the symptoms of heat stress. (See attached “Heat Stroke Fact Sheet”)
- The responsible person has the authority to cease/close the activity depending on the immediate conditions. (The temperature may be used as a general guide in determining whether to cease the activity.)

## **Heat Stress**

If any staff member or programme participant believes that they are suffering heat stress (information sheet attached), it must be reported to the person in charge of the activity who will arrange for the condition to be treated immediately; which may involve attention by a medical practitioner or calling an ambulance and a Accident/Incident/injury report form completed.

## **Prevention of Heat Stress**

Staff and programme participants operating in hot conditions are encouraged to take the following measures where appropriate:

- Wear loose fitting cotton or cotton blend clothes (subject to the safe working requirements)
- Apply effective sun screen to their exposed skin
- Take frequent small drinks (non alcoholic)

# Heat Stroke Fact Sheet

## What is heat stroke?

Heat stroke is the most severe form of heat stress and is a life-threatening emergency. It is the result of long, extreme exposure to the sun, in which a person does not sweat enough to lower body temperature. The elderly, infants, persons who work outdoors and those on certain types of medications are most susceptible to heat stroke. It is a condition that develops rapidly and requires immediate medical treatment.

## What causes heat stroke?

Our bodies produce a tremendous amount of internal heat and we normally cool ourselves by sweating and radiating heat through the skin. However, in certain circumstances, such as extreme heat, high humidity or vigorous activity in the hot sun, this cooling system may begin to fail, allowing heat to build up to dangerous levels.

If a person becomes dehydrated and cannot sweat enough to cool their body, their internal temperature may rise to dangerously high levels, causing heat stroke.

## What are the symptoms of heat stroke?

The following are the most common symptoms of heat stroke, although each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- headache
- hot, dry skin that is flushed but not sweaty
- dizziness
- a high body temperature
- disorientation, agitation or confusion
- loss of consciousness
- sluggishness or fatigue
- rapid heart beat
- seizure
- hallucinations

## How is heat stroke treated?

It is important for the person to be treated immediately as heat stroke can cause permanent damage or death. There are some immediate first aid measures you can take while waiting for help to arrive:

- Get the person indoors.
- Remove clothing and gently apply cool water to the skin followed by fanning to stimulate sweating.
- Apply ice packs to the groin and armpits.
- Have the person lie down in a cool area with their feet slightly elevated.

**The person should be immediately referred to or treated by a medical professional.**

**If the person remains ill, confused, vomiting or shows signs of altered consciousness, call an ambulance immediately and seek medical help**

***HEAT EXHAUSTION or HEAT STROKE CAN STILL OCCUR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOOD HYDRATION***

**How can heat stroke be prevented?**

There are precautions that can help protect you against the adverse effects of heat stroke. These include:

- Drink plenty of fluids during outdoor activities, especially on hot days. Water and sports drinks are the drinks of choice; avoid tea, coffee, soda and alcohol as these can lead to dehydration.
- Wear lightweight, tightly woven, loose-fitting clothing in light colours.
- Schedule vigorous activity for cooler times of the day.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- Increase time spent outdoors gradually to get your body used to the heat.
- During outdoor activities, take frequent drink breaks and mist yourself with a spray bottle to avoid becoming overheated.
- Try to spend as much time indoors as possible on very hot and humid days.

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