

Staying Cool In The Summer

During the summer months there are periods where the temperature rises above typical thermal comfort ranges for indoor work. When heat is combined with other factors like physical activity, air temperature, humidity, loss of fluids or fatigue, it can make indoor environments uncomfortable.

Here are a few tips to reduce discomfort during hot weather:

- Hydrate yourself. Drinking water will help the body adjust to higher temperatures.
- Use a fan to keep the surrounding air moving.
- Eat smaller but more frequent meals or snacks during the day.
- Wear light clothing that permits the evaporation of sweat (e.g. cotton clothing).
- Vary your work/rest schedule. Take breaks as needed to keep cool and hydrated.
- Avoid strenuous physical activity and caffeine drinks.
- Also note that some medications including hypotensives, diuretics, sedatives, antidepressants and amphetamines decrease the body's ability to cope with heat.



Higher Risk Activities

Some jobs at UVic involve greater physical activity, heavier clothing or outdoor work. During hot weather the following measures should be taken to avoid heat stress:

- Drink at least one cup of water every 20 to 30 minutes, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Use mechanical aids for manual lifting where possible (ie. dollies, carts, etc.)
- Use cooling fans where possible.
- Alter your work/rest schedule. Take breaks as needed and alter your pace of work. Rotate work with others if possible. If you feel tired, weak, or dizzy, take a break.
- Heat stress increases when heavy work is done at temperatures above 30 degrees. Don't push yourself beyond your limits.
- Wear sunscreen (minimum 30 SPF) and cover your head if working outside.
- If you experience the early symptoms and warning signs of heat stress, respond by taking a break and drinking water. Notify your supervisor of your symptoms.
- Sometimes people don't notice their own heat stress symptoms. If you notice that a co-worker has any of the symptoms listed in the Heat Stress Guide (see below), take him/her to a cool place and arrange for First Aid immediately by contacting Campus Security at 7599.



HEAT STRESS GUIDE

Heat stress symptoms are a set of natural signals telling you that something needs to be done to balance your body’s heating and cooling. As your body heats up, it tries to rid itself of excess heat through the evaporation of sweat. If it is unable to cool itself this way, your body temperature will increase. The causes, symptoms, and treatment of various heat-related illnesses are listed below:

Problem & Symptoms	Treatment	Prevention
<p><i>Heat rash (prickly heat)</i></p> <p>Tingling and burning of the skin, red itchy rash. Sweat glands plugged due to prolonged exposure of skin to heat, humidity, sweat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thorough drying • cool showers • calamine lotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep the skin as dry as possible • rest in a cool place • shower often • change clothes frequently • keep skin clean
<p><i>Heat cramps</i></p> <p>Painful spasms of muscles that do the hardest work (arms, legs, and abdomen)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • massage the muscle(s) • eat salt-containing foods (unless to be avoided for medical reasons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • warm up muscles before heavy work • take rest breaks • eat a normal, healthy diet
<p><i>Fainting</i></p> <p>Increased flow of blood to the skin to get rid of heat means less blood to the brain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lie down in a cool place • drink cool fluids to lower body temperature • Call for first aid or medical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drink plenty of fluids at regular intervals • avoid standing still in one position – move around
<p><i>Heat exhaustion</i></p> <p>Tired, weak, dizzy, clammy skin, slow weak pulse. Pale or flushed skin colour. Higher than normal heart rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lie down with knees raised • drink cool, not cold, fluids • call for first aid or medical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take 4-7 days to adjust (acclimatize) to the heat • drink plenty of fluids at regular intervals • take rest breaks in a cool place
<p><i>Heat stroke</i></p> <p>Person usually stops sweating, body core temperature is high (40 –43C), skin is hot and dry. Person experiences headache, dizziness, confusion, may lose consciousness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a medical emergency. Call 911 to summon an ambulance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All measures shown above.

Source: adapted from Alberta Workplace Health & Safety

