

Staying Cool in the Heat

Risk Management Services reminds the campus community to take precautions to avoid heat-related illness in unusually hot weather. Heat-related illness occurs when people's bodies cannot regulate their internal body temperature. In hot weather, the body normally cools itself by sweating. Under some conditions, however, sweating isn't enough. Such conditions include high humidity, limited movement of air, work in the direct sun, heavy physical exertion and poor physical condition. Some medical conditions and medications can also reduce the body's ability to tolerate heat. Still, heat-related illness can be preventable by following these guidelines when working in hot conditions:

- Drink small amounts of cool water frequently to prevent dehydration. Drink throughout the day to relieve thirst and maintain an adequate urine output.
- Plain water is usually adequate without need to take additional salt or minerals beyond those in your diet. However, you may choose to drink an electrolyte beverage to replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- Wear appropriate clothing. During periods of elevated temperature, employees should wear lightweight, loose-fitting natural fiber clothing (ex: cotton, linen) that allows ventilation of air to the body.
- Take breaks in cool areas. A few hours in air conditioning can help you stay cooler later in the hot areas.
- Take time to acclimate to heat and humidity. A heat wave is stressful to your body. You will have a greater tolerance for heat if you limit physical activity until you become accustomed to it. Acclimation to a stressful environment may take days or weeks. Gradual adaptation improves your ability to tolerate heat by sweating more efficiently, thus cooling the body and making it easier to maintain a normal temperature.

While it is important to remain as cool as possible in elevated temperatures, please remember that in some work locations, such as labs, studios and workshops, appropriate clothing includes pants and fully enclosed shoes. If needed, bring a change of clothing for more hazardous work locations.

Signs and symptoms of heat-related illness include headache, dizziness, light-headedness, fainting, weakness, malaise, mood change, mental confusion or irritability, nausea or vomiting, rapid pulse and excessive sweating or lack of sweating with hot dry skin. If you experience any of these symptoms, contact Campus Security immediately (78111/250-807-8111) for appropriate response/treatment.

For further information on indoor environmental quality, please read the guidelines at: <http://riskmanagement.ok.ubc.ca/health/indoorenvqual.html>