



Young Workers and Heat Illness

Heat is a serious workplace hazard

Young workers are an asset to the workforce. However, whether working indoors or outdoors, young workers may be more at risk for heat illness than other groups.

Why are young workers at risk?

Young workers approach tasks with energy, enthusiasm, and a desire for new challenges and more responsibilities. However, you may be asked to take on tasks that you are not prepared to do safely. It may be your first job or you are working in a new industry. You may not want to ask questions, raise concerns, or make demands of your employer because you do not want to cause issues.

As a young worker, you may be assigned more physically demanding tasks or longer shifts. You may also not be acclimatized to working in heat. Acclimatization means that you have not been given the opportunity to ease into work and allow your body to adapt to heat exposure. This can be common during seasonal jobs or in under-staffed conditions.

Common jobs where young workers may be exposed to hazardous heat¹

- Construction and utility workers
- Machine operators and factory or production workers
- Warehouse workers (e.g., packagers, stockers, order fillers)
- Mechanics and installation, maintenance, and repair workers
- Food preparers and dishwashers (e.g., restaurants, coffee shops, fast food)
- Home and office movers
- Agricultural workers (e.g., planters, harvesters)
- Landscapers and house painters
- Outdoor workers in entertainment (e.g., ticket takers, attraction attendants, tour guides, festival or concert workers)
- Outdoor recreation or education workers (e.g., park staff, camp leaders, childcare)



Workers younger than 25 are **twice as likely** to be injured at work than older workers².

Watch out for each other

What feels like a regular shift can turn deadly quickly. Watch for the signs of heat illness in yourself and your coworkers. Act quickly when signs appear to save lives. **When in doubt, call 911.**

Symptoms of heat illness can include:



Headache or
nausea



Weakness or
dizziness



Heavy sweating



Muscle cramps



Thirst



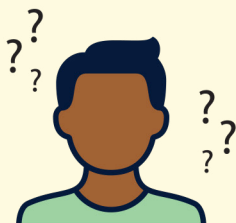
Decreased
urine output

First aid for heat illness includes:

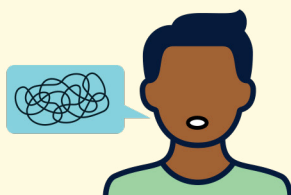
- Give cool water to drink.
- Remove unnecessary clothing.
- Move to a shaded or cooler area and cool with water, ice, or a fan.
- Do not leave alone.
- Seek medical care if needed. When in doubt, call 911.

When to call for help

Signs of a medical emergency:



Abnormal thinking
or behavior



Slurred speech



Seizures



Loss of
consciousness

What to do:

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Cool the worker right away with water or ice.
3. Remove unnecessary clothing and give cool water to drink, if possible.
4. Stay with the worker until help arrives.

Prevention is key! Lower your risk of heat illness



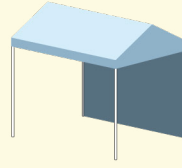
Ease into hot work environments



Monitor work intensity



Drink cool water



Take rest breaks in shaded or cool areas



Dress for the heat



**Eat water-rich foods
(e.g., fruits and vegetables)**

Your employer is responsible for your safety

You have a right to a safe workplace free from recognized hazards, including heat hazards.

Your employer should:

- Comply with federal and state child labor laws. For example, federal laws prohibit youth under 18 from working certain hours and from performing dangerous or hazardous work.
- Train you to use safe work practices and recognize hazards. Training should occur whenever a new task is assigned and be in a language and vocabulary that you can understand. Heat safety trainings should help you understand your heat exposure risks and teach you about prevention actions and first aid.
- Model safe working behaviors and decision-making. This could include providing scheduled work breaks, especially as you get used to working in the heat.
- Train you on what to do if you get hurt on the job.
- Provide safety equipment as necessary that fits correctly.
- Implement a mentoring or buddy system. Have an older or more experienced worker help you learn the ropes of a new job.
- Encourage you to ask questions about tasks and tell you whom to ask. Respond positively and considerately to all questions so that you do not feel reluctant to speak up.
- Ensure that the equipment you operate is both legal and safe for your use. Label equipment that workers under 18 are not allowed to operate.



Resources

Young Workers: <https://www.osha.gov/Young-Workers>

Heat Illness Prevention: <https://www.osha.gov/Heat>

Talking Safety: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/TalkingSafety/>

Footnotes

1. Federal child labor laws prohibit employment in certain occupations and require restrictions for youth under 18, for more information visit: [YouthRules.gov](https://www.youthrules.gov).
2. Source: CDC: Nonfatal Occupational Injuries to Younger Workers — United States, 2012–2018. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6935a3.htm?s_cid=mm6935a3_w

OSHA is here to help!

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the agency of the Department of Labor (DOL) that protects workers from dangers on the job that can cause injuries or illnesses. Federal law entitles workers to a safe workplace. Workers have the right to speak up about hazards without fear of retaliation. Call or visit www.osha.gov/workers for information about how to file an online confidential complaint with OSHA and ask for an inspection.

1-800-321-OSHA (6742) | TTY 1-877-889-5627

[osha.gov/workers](https://www.osha.gov/workers)

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