



Keeping Active in the Summer – A word of caution

Special heat related stress risks that employees may not consider during their quick lunch walk include; elevated heart rates before exercise, heat stroke, quicker dehydration and quicker loss of electrolytes with moderate activity.

Employees also need to make sure they are wearing proper clothing to be able to properly perspire and how to cool off after exercise even for their quick 10 minute bouts of activity.

- **Medical conditions:** Certain medical conditions can cause our bodies to act abnormally in the summer heat which can make it more difficult to cool off. Diabetes and heart disease are two of many conditions that alter our body's responsiveness to heat over time making it more difficult to cool off. Other conditions that can effect heat related stress risk include: general effects of aging, alcohol or other drugs, recent illness involving fluid loss from vomiting or diarrhea.
- **Hydration:** Dehydration is dangerous for anyone in the summer heat. Stay hydrated when being active outside. Drinking water or other non-diuretic liquids is important (beer, coffee and soda will dehydrate you). Don't be picky about the temperature of water either...just drink!
- **Metabolic rate:** As your core temperature raises so does your metabolic rate. While this sounds like a dream come true it can actually be dangerous to anyone being active outdoors. The higher intensity your activity becomes the higher our core body temperature over time. The harder your heart and entire body have to work to keep your body balanced.
- **Temperature and heat index:** It's important to know and understand the heat index. The heat index is an index that combines air temperature and relative humidity in an attempt to determine the human-perceived equivalent temperature; how hot it feels. The higher the heat index the better off you would be to limit your time outside exercising or exercise inside.
- **Humidity:** Evaporation rate (therefore, cooling rate) is reduced as the relative humidity rises. So in high heat and high humidity short bouts of activity in shaded areas are most suitable.
- **Clothing:** Your clothes must not hinder your heat-loss mechanism. Make sure clothing is light colored, made from light material and is breathable. Hats should have ventilation so heat can be released from your head.
- **Fitness level:** The unfit, and some special populations like children, will not be ready or able to affect the cooling mechanism of adequate perspiration. The obese also will also be less able to enjoy heat-loss, as they wear more naturally insulating adipose tissue like excess clothing.
- **Acclimatization:** Some of us can train ourselves to be more tolerant of heat, by improving our physiological heat-loss mechanisms. This is why you see runners on days when you could cook an egg on your car hood! Training your body to be acclimated to the heat and humidity is necessary if you will be competing in heat and humidity. It is not necessary to push yourself outdoors on the hottest day possible if you are just getting in average physical activity.

For safety education for your employees, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5475 or Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com.

