

Prevent Heat Illness Among Pregnant Workers



Overview

- Pregnant workers are more likely to experience heat stroke or heat exhaustion sooner than non-pregnant workers because it is harder for the body to cool down during pregnancy.¹
- Pregnant workers are also more likely to become dehydrated which is a primary contributor to heat-related illness.
- Work in very hot environments or specific work situations may lead to an increase in core (internal body) temperature which has been linked to adverse pregnancy outcomes in some cases.²
- Pregnant workers should discuss their occupational exposures with their medical providers in advance to determine if work accommodations or restrictions are needed.

Workers often exposed to excess heat

- Outdoor workers, especially in agriculture, construction, landscaping and waste collection
- Indoor workers without climate control (e.g., central A/C) during hot weather, such as those employed in warehouses, or near radiant heat sources
- Manufacturing workers, such as those employed in metal fabrication, glass or plastics manufacturing, and food processing
- Healthcare workers
- Cooks and dishwashers in commercial kitchens (e.g., restaurants)

Watch for signs of heat illness and act quickly

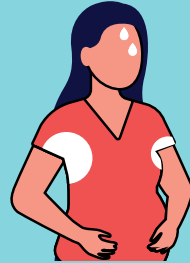
When in doubt, call 911. Symptoms of heat illness while pregnant can include but are not limited to:



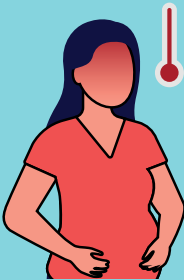
Headache or nausea



Weakness or dizziness



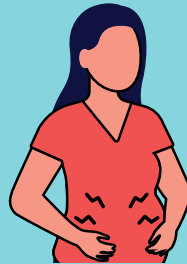
Heavy sweating or hot, dry skin



Elevated body temperature



Thirst



Increased Braxton Hicks contractions or cramping



Decreased urine output

When to call for help

Signs of a medical emergency:

- Abnormal thinking or behavior
- Slurred speech
- Seizures
- Fainting
- Hot, dry skin
- Blurred vision

What to do:

- Cool right away with water or ice
- Call 911 immediately
- Stay with others until help arrives
- If possible, move to shaded area

How to lower risk of heat illness

- Ease into hot work environments
- Monitor work intensity
- Drink cool water
- Take rest breaks in shade or cool areas
- Dress for the heat
- Eat water-rich foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables)
- Watch out for each other
- Know and recognize the symptoms of heat illness



Take action in response to signs and symptoms

- Give cool water to drink
- Remove unnecessary clothing
- Move to a cooler area and use a fan, if available
- Cool with water and ice
- Do not leave alone
- Seek urgent medical care if needed and follow-up with medical provider after any symptoms or signs
- Work with employer and medical provider to prevent future heat stress



Sources

1. Heat - Reproductive Health

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/heat.html>

2. Occupational Exposure to Heat and Hot Environments

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2016-106/pdfs/2016-106.pdf>

Know your rights

Federal law requires that workers affected by pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions be treated the same as other persons not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work. Under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) requires employers to provide “reasonable accommodations” to a worker’s known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

The OSH Act prohibits employers from discriminating against an employee for exercising rights under, or as a result of actions that are required by, the standard. The employee who files a safety and health complaint, or exercises rights is also protected.

It is ultimately the employer’s responsibility to ensure that the workplace is safe and healthful for workers; however, to be effective, a heat illness prevention program needs the meaningful participation of workers and their representatives.

For more information on heat illness prevention, scan the QR code or visit [osha.gov/heat](https://www.osha.gov/heat).

For information on employment protections for pregnant workers, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/pregnant-nursing-employment-protections>

