

Personal Risk Factors for Heat Illness

Several personal factors increase the risk of heat related injury and illness. These include age, pregnancy, health conditions, medications, and acclimatization status. Consult your healthcare provider about whether your personal factors may increase your risk of heat illness while working outdoors.

Age

People who are 60 and older are more likely to be affected by extreme heat. Older adults do not adjust as quickly to changes in heat. They are also more likely to have health conditions that affect the body's ability to react to heat.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy naturally increases the body's temperature, which can lead to quicker heat exhaustion. Additionally, it also adds excess weight, increasing the risk of heat illness and placing more stress on the heart and lungs. More fluids are needed to cool down and more energy is needed to perform a given task during pregnancy.

Health Conditions and Behaviors

Certain health conditions and behaviors can affect the body's ability to respond to heat.

These include:

- Diabetes
- Respiratory infections/diseases
- Obesity
- Poor nutrition
- Alcohol use
- Illicit drug use
- Low intake of water



Medications

Some medications make it harder to regulate body temperature and may increase the risk of dehydration.

These include:

- Tranquilizers
- Diuretics
- Antihistamines
- Beta blockers
- Laxatives
- Psychiatric medications such as antidepressants

Acclimatization Status

Abrupt exposure to heat can increase the risk of heat illness for new or returning employees. New or returning workers should gradually increase their exposure to working in hot conditions over a 7-to-14-day period.