

HEATWAVES: IMPROVING RESILIENCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

REACHING BOILING POINT

While many of us enjoy warm summer days, heatwaves are often a different matter. Forcing the body into overdrive, high temperatures can have a marked negative impact on health. It is therefore important to ensure you take steps towards maintaining the wellbeing and productivity of your employees and business in periods of hot weather.

ASSESS RISK

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides information on managing and alleviating risks to the working environment caused by heat. **Heat risk assessments** should be carried out in workplaces prone to excessive heat. These should consider factors such as:

- ▶ Work rate
- ▶ Working climate
- ▶ Clothing and respiratory protective equipment
- ▶ Age, build and medical factors

Controlling for these in a risk assessment, and taking steps to mitigate the risks will improve employees' working environment and productivity year round, not just in heatwaves.

MANAGING EMPLOYEE COMFORT

There are a number of simple steps that employers can take to reduce the risks of overheating year round, as well as during heatwaves, including:

Use fans or air conditioners to manage temperature

Provide heat-specific PPE or relax dress codes

Use barriers to reduce exposure to radiant heat

Change working patterns and allow extra rest breaks

Train staff to spot symptoms of heat stress

Identify staff who may be at higher risk of illness

Prevent dehydration by supplying cold water

Make staff aware of emergency procedures

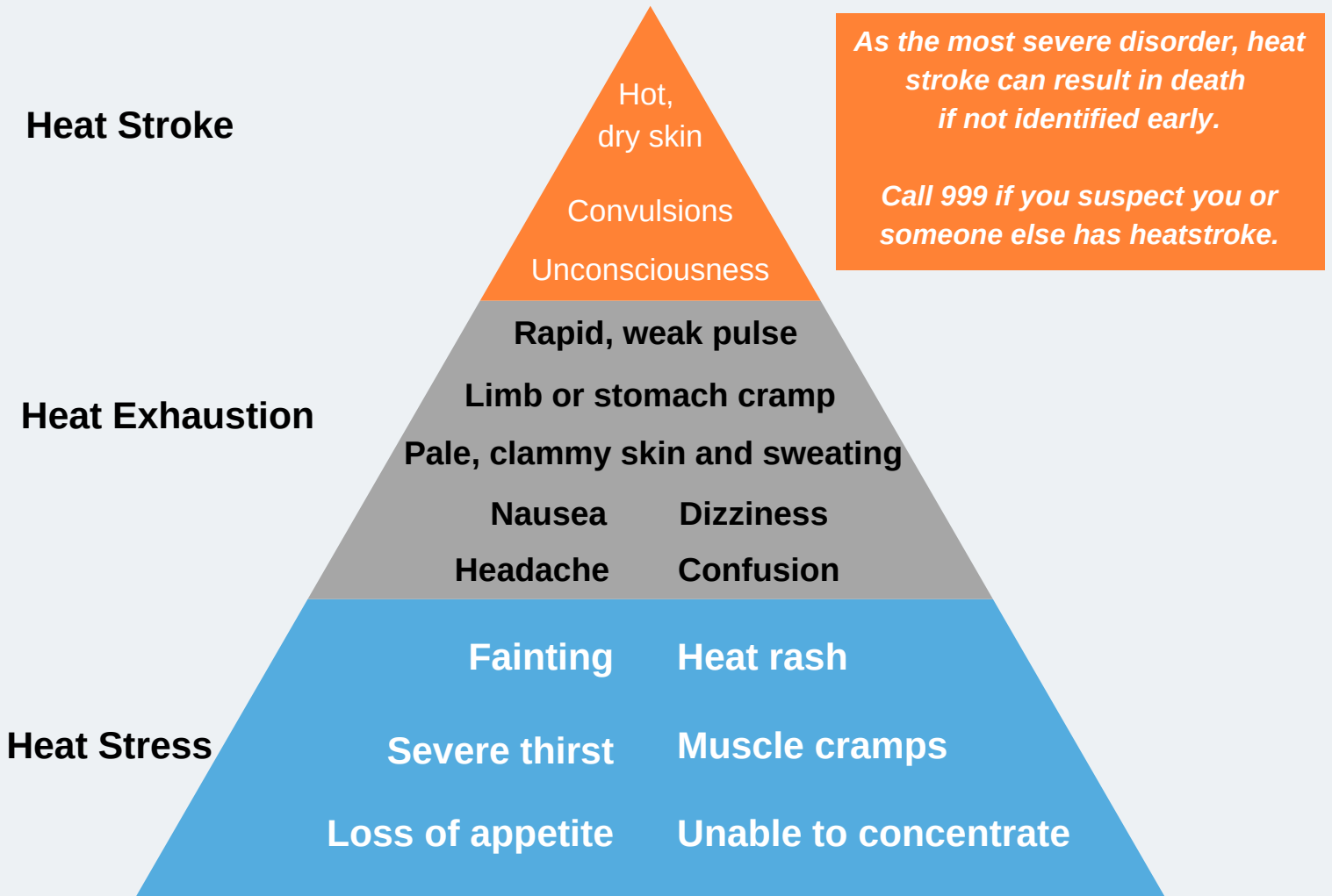


In some industries working in hot environments may be normal, but during heatwaves, workers in any environment are more susceptible to heat stress.



RECOGNISING HEAT STRESS

Individuals may be affected by heat at different times and in different ways. There are three stages to illness as a result of heat, all of which have a number of recognisable symptoms



COOLING SOMEONE DOWN

If you suspect that someone is suffering from a heat-related illness, there are four key steps to help them feel better:

Move them to somewhere cool, away from heat

Get them to lie down and raise their feet slightly

Get them to drink plenty of water or rehydration drinks

Cool their skin - use a cold water spray or sponge

Ensure the person is accompanied until they feel better - this should take no more than 30 minutes. If they do not start feeling better after that, they may be suffering from heat stroke - call 999 immediately.

For more information on heat stress in the workplace, visit:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/heatstress/>

For information on the health impacts of heat and symptoms of heat exhaustion or heat stroke, visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/>

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/health/yourhealth/hot-weather-and-health>