

Purpose

This Guidance Note provides practical advice for dealing with heat illness and related health and safety problems. It contains recommended actions and measures to prevent or minimise the likelihood of heat illness.

Background

Heat illness occurs when the body cannot sufficiently cool itself. Factors that contribute to this include:

- temperature (34°C and above according to Elders Weather or <http://www.eldersweather.com.au/vic/north-east/wangaratta>)
- humidity (60% and above)
- amount of air movement
- radiant temperature of surroundings
- clothing
- physical activity (metabolic heat load).

Heat illness covers a range of medical conditions that can arise when the body is unable to properly cope with moving in heat. These conditions include:

- heat stroke - a life threatening condition that requires immediate first aid and medical attention
- fainting
- heat exhaustion
- heat cramps
- rashes (also called prickly heat)
- heat fatigue
- worsening of pre-existing illnesses and conditions.

Signs and symptoms of heat illness include feeling sick, nauseous, dizzy or weak. Clumsiness, collapse and convulsions may also be experienced as a result of heat illness. Dancers, participants or officials with these signs or symptoms need to seek immediate medical attention.

There are several factors that need to be considered when determining if there is a risk of heat illness to dancers, participants or officials and ways to protect them.

Identifying heat illness hazards

Air temperature alone cannot be used to determine whether there is a risk of heat illness. The key risk factors that need to be taken into account are:

- air temperature
- humidity
- radiant heat (from the sun or other sources)
- air movement or wind speed
- workload
- physical fitness of the dancers, participants or officials
- clothing

Minimise Risk

If there is a risk of heat illness at an event, it must be controlled. The risk can also be minimised by modifying the program and encouraging dancers, participants and officials to increase fluid intake, particularly water. During hot weather, everyone should be encouraged to drink a cup of water (about 200 mL) every 15 to 20 minutes, and not rely solely on soft drinks or caffeinated drinks.