



# Keep Pests Out of your Office

KEEP PESTS AND PESTICIDES OUT  
OF YOUR OFFICE

Whether your office is in a converted house or a high-rise tower, a surprising number of pests find their way inside. Many of us have seen ants marching into the break room or gnats hovering around indoor plants—or heard a co-worker complaining about itchy bites. When pests invade, you may be tempted to spray them yourself or demand that your building manager bring in a pest control company to spray, but there are safer and more effective options than spraying pesticides indoors.

## WHY ARE THERE PESTS IN MY BUILDING?

When insect and rodent pests enter buildings, they'll stay if they find food, water, and shelter. Building managers and maintenance crews try to prevent pests from getting in by plugging holes and caulking cracks, but they can't stop you from bringing in cereal infested with beetles or a potted plant that will eventually generate thousands of gnats.

## WHICH PESTS VISIT OFFICE BUILDINGS?

**Almost any pest can crawl, fly, or hitchhike into your building.**

§ **FRUIT FLIES** feed on yeasts present on ripe fruits and vegetables, food scraps, and sugary liquids.

§ **PANTRY PESTS** include beetles and moths that lay eggs in nuts, cereal, crackers, and even chocolate. They can show up when someone leaves uneaten snacks in a drawer for months and those snacks contain beetle or moth eggs. These insects easily spread to other parts of the building.

§ **ANTS** often come indoors to find food during summer and fall when they no longer find food outside. Rain or irrigation will sometimes drive ants indoors to escape flooded conditions.



§ **COCKROACHES** can get into buildings by slipping under doorways or entering through underground parking lots. Most species live outdoors, but you may see a few roaches indoors searching for food and water. If you see roaches, don't spray or use foggers.

§ **RATS & MICE** squeeze under doors or into holes. They nest in papers and will eat almost anything, including paper, fabric, and plastic.

§ **SPIDERS** are beneficial predators of mosquitoes, gnats, and house flies. Most are harmless. Black widow spiders rarely live inside office buildings, and brown recluse spiders do not live in California.

§ **FUNGUS GNATS** may buzz around your face and computer screen as you're trying to work. If you notice them, look for the usual culprit—overwatered plants.

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## PREVENT PESTS FROM INVADING

- Bring ripe fruit home or store in a refrigerator don't leave fruit on your desk overnight.
- Keep snacks in rigid, sealed containers, not in plastic bags.
- Clean food-soiled dishes, utensils, and surfaces by the end of each day.
- Dispose of food in garbage cans that have plastic liners.
- Ask that garbage cans be emptied each night.
- Reduce clutter in work areas. Store items away from the floor in cabinets, racks, or bins.
- Don't overwater potted plants. Bring plants home if you notice they're infested with gnats.

## LEAVE YOUR OWN PESTICIDES AT HOME

**Never bring in your own pesticides, even if you think a product is harmless. Even botanical pesticide sprays can cause coughing or eye irritation, and cause or trigger asthma.**

### YOUR RIGHTS

Your employer should tell you which chemicals, including pesticides, are used in your work area and when they'll be used. Before a pesticide treatment, you should have time to remove personal articles and food from your desk or office. If you are not provided with a material safety data sheet containing information about the chemical, you should ask to see one.

## OFFICE WORKERS & PESTICIDE APPLICATION

When employees returned to work on a Monday after their office building had been fogged and sprayed with pesticides over the weekend, a number of them experienced symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and headaches. Thinking that they had food poisoning, they stayed in the building instead of going outside for fresh air. As a result, their symptoms worsened, and three workers were sent to the hospital.

Several factors led to this incident. The applicator did not use Integrated Pest Management or IPM (see section on IPM below); for example, he sprayed pesticides, although he hadn't identified a pest beforehand. The building, poorly ventilated to begin with, was not well ventilated after the treatment. And no one informed employees about the application, so they delayed leaving the building and getting medical care.

### GOT PESTS? TELL THE BUILDING MANAGER

- The sooner you let building management know about pest problems or sanitation issues, the easier it is to correct them. Report spills, plumbing leaks, or areas that need cleaning.
- When reporting a pest, note the evidence you've seen: droppings, damage by the pest, or the pest itself.
- If your building needs an expert to manage pests, ask your building manager to hire a company that does integrated pest management or IPM (see Resources below).

## RESOURCES

University of California IPM Program  
[www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/menu.house.html](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/menu.house.html)  
Guides to all of the pests mentioned above as well as information about how to hire a pest control company: [Link](#)

[California Department of Public Health](#)  
Occupational Pesticide  
Illness Prevention Program

Certification for Pest Control Companies  
Companies trained to use IPM practices:  
EcoWise Certified, [www.ecowisecertified.org](http://www.ecowisecertified.org)  
[Green Shield Certified](#),  
[Quality GreenPro](#),

[California Department of Pesticide Regulation](#)  
[Our Water Our World](#). Fact Sheet .



The Safety Division will be passing on monthly ergonomic tips in our new section "REVISITING ERGONOMICS... We hope this will be helpful to you and your workstation!

# OFFICE ERGONOMICS : Mini-Break

**Please check with physician before doing stretches.**

## Mini-Break Stretches

(Material from Oregon OSHA)

If you work all day at a computer, get up and move frequently to reduce fatigue. A one to two-minute break after each hour of intense computer work and a 10- to 15-minute break after two hours of moderate computer work should be sufficient.

Daily stretching exercises can help reduce muscle tension and eyestrain, but stretching doesn't take the place of a properly setup workstation or cure existing discomfort.

The stretches below take about five minutes. Repeat each stretch three to five times. Do all of the exercises or just those that relieve tension in a particular area.

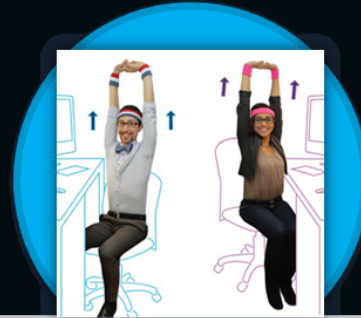
If you have concerns about an existing medical condition or injury, see your physician before you do any of these exercises.

## Mini Breaks- Desk Stretch



Gently pull each elbow to the opposite side overhead

- Hold both elbows for 10 seconds each



Clasp hands together above the head, stretching upward.

- Hold for 10 seconds



Hug one knee at a time, pulling it toward your chest.

- Hold both knees for 10 seconds each



Cross your legs and alternate twists toward the back of the chair.

- Hold for 10 seconds

# Heat Illness

## Do you know what to look for?

Workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments may be at risk of heat stress. Exposure to extreme heat can result in occupational illnesses and injuries. *Heat stress can result in heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or heat rashes.* Heat can also increase the risk of injuries in workers as it may result in sweaty palms, fogged-up safety glasses, and dizziness. Burns may also occur as a result of accidental contact with hot surfaces or steam.

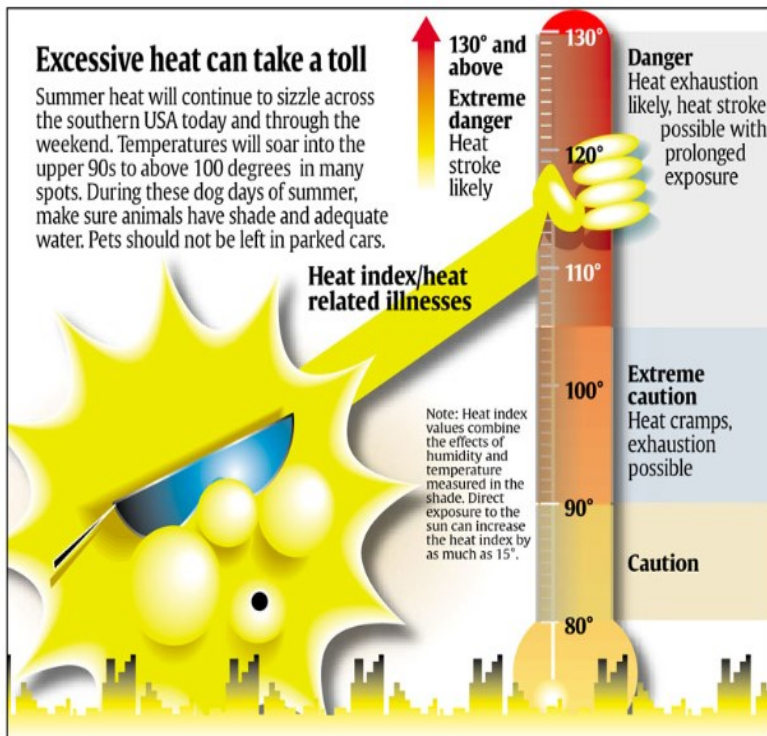
Workers at risk of heat stress include outdoor workers and workers in hot environments such as firefighters, bakery workers, farmers, construction workers, miners, boiler room workers, factory workers, and others. Workers at greater risk of heat stress include those who are 65 years of age or older, are overweight, have heart disease or high blood pressure, or take medications that may be affected by extreme heat.

Prevention of heat stress in workers is important. Employers should provide training to workers so they understand what heat stress is, how it affects their health and safety, and how it can be prevented.

## Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related disorder. It occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. When heat stroke occurs, the body temperature can rise to 106 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.

[Title 8 Section §3395. Heat Illness Prevention](#)



Sources: National Weather Service; American Red Cross

By Doyle Rice and Julie Snider, USA TODAY

### Symptoms

Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- Chills
- Throbbing headache
- High body temperature
- Confusion/dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating
- Hallucinations

### First Aid

Take the following steps to treat a worker with heat stroke:

- Fanning their body.
- Spraying, sponging, or showering them with water.
- Soaking their clothes with water.
- Immersing up to the neck in cold water
- Call 911 and notify their supervisor.
- Move the sick worker to a cool shaded area.
- rapidly** cool the worker using methods such as:

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## Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of the water and salt, usually through excessive sweating. Workers most prone to heat exhaustion are those that are elderly, have high blood pressure, and those working in a hot environment.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Heavy sweating
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Dizziness, confusion
- Nausea
- Clammy, moist skin
- Pale or flushed complexion
- Muscle cramps
- Slightly elevated body temperature

### First Aid

Treat a worker suffering from heat exhaustion with the following:

- Drink fluids gradually (4oz. Every 15min.) Water best choice.
- Have them rest in a cool, shaded or air-conditioned area.
- Have them take a cool shower, bath, or sponge bath.

## Heat Syncope

Heat syncope is a fainting (syncope) episode or dizziness that usually occurs with prolonged standing or sudden rising from a sitting or lying position. Factors that may contribute to heat syncope include dehydration and lack of acclimatization.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of heat syncope include:

- Light-headedness
- Dizziness
- Fainting

### First Aid

Workers with heat syncope should:

- Sit or lie down in a cool place when they begin to feel symptoms.
- Slowly drink water, clear juice, or a sports beverage.

## Heat Cramps

Heat cramps usually affect workers who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture levels. Low salt levels in muscles causes painful cramps. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.



### Symptoms

Muscle pain or spasms usually in the abdomen, arms, or legs.

### First Aid

Workers with heat cramps should:

- Stop all activity, and sit in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Do not return to strenuous work for a few hours after the cramps subside because further exertion may lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Seek medical attention if any of the following apply:
  - The worker has heart problems.
  - The worker is on a low-sodium diet.
  - The cramps do not subside within one hour.