

HEAT STRESS

in the CLASSROOM

What is heat stress? Heat stress occurs when the body cannot get rid of excess heat. When this happens, the body's core temperature rises and the heart rate increases. Symptoms include dizziness, nausea, fainting, confusion, muscle cramps, headaches, heavy sweating and tiredness. Heat can trigger exhaustion or heat stroke and worsen existing conditions such as cardiovascular, respiratory and kidney diseases, as well as mental health problems.



WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO PREVENT HEAT STRESS IN THE CLASSROOM?



Ensure that teachers and students are indoors during peak daylight hours between 10 am to 4 pm.



Provide drinking water in sustainable receptacles such as traditional claypot earthen ware. Avoid drinking water in plastic bottles because microplastics are released when these are exposed to extreme heat, which can lead to long-term harm to the health.



Redesign uniforms of teaching personnel and students to become more appropriate to harsh heat. Avoid dark-colored, artificial fabrics and use light-colored, natural fibers.



Provide electric fans to facilitate ventilation. However, above 35°C, fans are no longer effective in aiding to cool a room. Instead, schools must ensure better student distribution and improve classroom facilities.



Provide access to showers and water wells. Ensure access to showers and water wells for immediate cooling.



Raise awareness on heat stress management, especially to elderly teachers and students with disabilities. Schools must also ensure that teachers and school health professionals are trained in first aid for heat emergencies.



Renovate classrooms to become more adaptive to climate disturbances such as heatwaves.



Ensure quality climate education for all by providing teachers with training and tools to teach climate change effectively and holistically.

