

A Healthier You

Extreme Heat



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Extreme heat events, or heat waves are a leading cause of extreme weather-related deaths in the US. This number has been rising, so it's important to make sure you are aware of how to prevent heat-related illness and the warning signs.

What is extreme heat?

Conditions of extreme heat are defined as summertime temperatures that are substantially hotter and/or more humid than average for location at that time of year.

Who's at risk?

All people can develop heat-related illness, however, the following groups at a higher risk:

- Infants and young children
- People aged 65 or older
- People who have a mental illness
- Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure

What are the signs & symptoms?

Muscle cramping might be the first sign of heat-related illness, and may lead to heat exhaustion or stroke.



What is heat exhaustion?

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Signs include:

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

Some cooling measures that may be effective are the following:

- Cool, nonalcoholic beverages
- Rest
- Cool shower, bath, or sponge bath
- An air-conditioned environment
- Lightweight clothing

What is heat stroke?

Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature. Symptoms include:

- High body temperature (above 103°F)
- Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Possible unconsciousness

If you see any of these signs, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the victim.



What can you do?

COOL DOWN

- Find an air-conditioned place – either your home or go to the mall or library
- Avoid outdoor activities or limit them to the morning and evening hours. Avoid direct sunlight.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device. Take cool showers or baths, then sitting in front of the fan may make it more efficient

Being in an air conditioned room is a great way to protect against heat-related illness and death.

DRINK UP

Drink a lot of fluid to replace what you lose through sweat, which is your body's way of cooling itself.

- Drink more water than usual
- Have a beverage with you at all times, and sip or drink frequently. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink more fluids
- Avoid drinks that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar, as they can cause you to lose more body fluid
- Remind others to drink enough water



PLAN AHEAD

Check the weather forecast and plan heat-safe activities when it's hot outside.

- Pace yourself, schedule breaks from outside activities, and seek out shade
- Plan to eat many small meals and snacks rather than a few big meals
- Avoid sunburn, use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher
- Learn the signs of heat illness. If you think someone has heat stroke, seek medical attention immediately and begin cooling that person.



If you must be out in the heat:

If you are going to be outdoors for work or pleasure, plan heat-safe activities; pace yourself by scheduling breaks in shady areas; eat many small meals and snacks rather than a few big meals; avoid sunburn by using sunscreen products with a high sun protection factor (SPF) rating; and know the signs of heat illness.

Where can I learn more?

For more information on heat-related illness and extreme heat, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/index.html>