



GET READY!

EXTREME HEAT

A heat wave is an extended period of extreme heat, and is often accompanied by high humidity. These conditions can be dangerous and even life-threatening for people who don't take the proper precautions.

- Prepare for a heat wave by checking to see that your home's cooling system works properly.
- Make sure your home is well insulated, including weather stripping around doors and windows.
- Keep storm windows up all year.
- Plan on being inside a cool building during the hottest time of the day.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, or awnings.
- Never leave children or pets alone in a closed vehicle.
- During a heat wave, slow down and avoid strenuous activity. Stay inside as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, consider going to a public building or to the lowest floor and staying out of the sunshine. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Drink plenty of water regularly and often even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine. Eat small meals and eat more often.
- If someone is experiencing heat cramps, get them to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids at a rate of a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give caffeinated or alcoholic liquids, which can worsen conditions.
- Watch for signs of heat exhaustion, including cool, moist, pale, or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. Body temperature will be near normal. If you see signs of heat exhaustion, get the person out of the heat and to a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, give him or her cool water to drink.
- Watch for signs of heat stroke, including hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Body temperature can be very high—as high as 105° F. If the person was sweating from heavy work or exercise, his or her skin may be wet otherwise, it will be dry. If you see signs of heat stroke, call 9-1-1 and get help fast. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body by immersing the victim in a cool bath or wrapping wet sheets around the body and fanning the victim. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the person refuses water or is vomiting or his or her level of consciousness changes, do not give them anything else to eat or drink.





Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness

The best defense is prevention. Here are some prevention tips:

- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar—these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library—even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. Call your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on:
 - 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
- Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. Warning: If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage. Remember the warning in the first "tip" (above), too.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels).

This information provided by NCEH's Health Studies Branch (www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb).

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat, or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY).

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