

Heat & Health: What You Need to Know

When it is hot and humid outside, your body gets rid of excess heat by sweating and increasing blood flow to the skin. Humidity makes it harder for your body to cool itself. When you are unable to maintain a normal body temperature, heat illness can occur. Severe heat illness can result in death.

Know who is at risk

Anyone can develop heat-related illness, but some people are at greater risk.

- **Infants and young children.** They are sensitive to the effects of high temperatures and rely on others to control their environments.
- **Pregnant women.** They are under more bodily stress and are more likely to become dehydrated.
- **Older adults (65+).** As people age, their sweat cooling mechanism becomes less efficient.
- **People with chronic health conditions** such as heart or kidney disease, breathing conditions, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity.
- **People who exercise or work outside, or work inside in a hot, unairconditioned space.**



Know how to prevent heat-related illness



- If you are outside, remember water, rest, and shade.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Don't wait until you're thirsty. During heavy work or exercise, drink 2 to 4 glasses (16–32 ounces) of water each hour. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugary drinks.
- Take frequent breaks. Limit outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Stay in the shade. Wear sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing.
- Air conditioning is the best way to protect yourself. If your home is not air-conditioned, visit an air-conditioned space like a cooling center or library. Even a few hours a day can help to cool your body.
- Check on people who live alone, especially the elderly.
- Some medications decrease sweating or thirst and dehydrate the body. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the medications you take to learn about their effects.
- Never leave a child unattended in a car.

Know the signs of heat-related illness and how to treat it

Heat Stroke

What to look for

- High body temperature (103°F or higher)
- Skin can be hot and red, or dry and damp
- Fast, strong pulse
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Confusion
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Convulsions

What to do

- Call 911 immediately. Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency.
- Move the person to a cooler place.
- Loosen clothes.
- Cool the person quickly by wetting or applying ice to the neck, armpits, and groin areas.

Heat Exhaustion

What to look for

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fainting

What to do

- Move to a cool place.
- Loosen your clothes.
- Put cool, wet cloths on your body or take a cool bath.
- Sip water.

Get medical help right away if:

- You are throwing up.
- Your symptoms get worse.
- Your symptoms last longer than 1 hour.

Heat Cramps

What to look for

- Heavy sweating during work or exercise
- Muscle pain or spasms

What to do

- Stop physical activity and move to a cool place.
- Drink water or a sports drink.
- Wait for cramps to go away before you do any more physical activity.

Get medical help right away if:

- Cramps last longer than 1 hour

