



HOW TO BEAT THE HEAT... THIS SUMMER... Preventing Heat-Related Illness

Never leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle can reach 140 degrees Fahrenheit within minutes. Exposure to such high temperatures can kill in minutes.

Drink plenty of water. Carry water or juice with you and drink continuously even if you don't feel thirsty. Injury and death can occur from dehydration, which can happen quickly and unnoticed. Symptoms of dehydration are often confused with other causes. Your body needs water to keep cool. Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies.

Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine. They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true about beer, which actually dehydrates the body. People who are on fluid-restrictive diets or who have a problem with fluid retention should consult their doctor before increasing liquid intake.

Air conditioning provides the safest escape from extreme heat, and there are ways to maximize how it can work for you: Install window air conditioners snugly. Check air conditioning ducts for proper insulation. Vacuum air conditioner filters weekly during periods of high use to provide more cool air.

Go elsewhere to get relief during the hottest part of the day if you have no air conditioning.

Stay indoors as much as possible, on the lowest floor out of the sun. Keep heat outside and cool air inside, closing any doors or windows that may allow heat in. Consider keeping storm windows installed throughout the year to keep the heat out of a house.

Plan to check on family, friends, and neighbors -- especially the elderly - who do not have air conditioning or who spend much of their time alone.

Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors reflect heat and sunlight and help you maintain a normal body temperature. Cover as much skin as possible to avoid sunburn and over-warming effects of sunlight on your body. Keep direct sunlight off your face by wearing a wide-brimmed hat. Sunlight can burn and warm and inner core of your body. Also use umbrellas and sunglasses to shield against the sun's rays. Change into dry clothing if your clothes become saturated with sweat.

Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or more—even on cloudy days. Apply a liberal amount of sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.

Eat small meals of carbohydrates, salads and fruit, and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, because they increase metabolic heat.

Slow down. Reduce, eliminate or reschedule strenuous activity. If you must engage in strenuous activity, do so during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. Stay in the shade when possible, and avoid prolonged sun exposure during the hottest part of the day, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Take frequent breaks when working outdoors or engaging in physical activity on warm days. Take time out to find a cool place. If you recognize that you or someone else is showing signs of a heat-related illness, stop activity and find a cool place. Remember, have fun, but stay cool!