



Public Health Division

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PREVENTING HEAT ILLNESS

Summer brings a lot of sun and fun, but it can also be a dangerous time when the temperatures begin to climb. Heat-related deaths and illnesses are 100% preventable, yet many people get sick or die every year during periods of extreme heat.

Particularly vulnerable populations are the elderly (over 65 years), infants and young children (under 4 years), overweight people, people who play or work hard during extreme heat, anyone using drugs or alcohol in the heat, and people with fever, chronic illnesses, or other medical conditions that make them more susceptible to heat, such as heart disease or high blood pressure.

To prevent heat-related illnesses and to protect your health when temperatures are high:

- **DRINK** -- Drink plenty of cool fluids, even if you are not physically active and even if you are not thirsty. If you are physically active, drink 2-4 glasses (16-32 ounces) every hour. Check with your doctor if you are on a fluid-restricted diet. Avoid very cold liquids as they can cause stomach cramps. Avoid liquids with alcohol, caffeine, and large amounts of sugar as these actually increase the loss of body fluid. Drinking fruit juice and sports beverages help replace necessary salt and minerals lost from the body through sweating.
- **DRESS** – Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Add a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) if headed outdoors.
- **DECREASE** – Limit physical activity and stay indoors in an air-conditioned space (home, shopping mall, library). During an extreme heat wave, find the location of cooling centers in your community. Electric fans will not prevent heat-related illness when the temperature climbs into the high 90s.
- **DEFEND** – If working outside in the heat, monitor coworkers and have them do the same for you. Check on the elderly at least twice a day. Check infants and children frequently. Check on those who are overweight or who are ill or who are on medication.
- **DEMONSTRATE** – Use common sense. Avoid hot foods and heavy meals. Make sure animals and pets have plenty of fresh water and shade. Consider bringing pets inside and consider wetting down outside animals. Adjust your physical activity at home and on vacation until your body slowly adjusts to hotter temperatures.
- **DON'T** -- **Do NOT leave people or pets in a parked car for any length of time for any reason.**

Following these simple suggestions will help keep you and those you love safe from the dangerous and potentially deadly effects of heat-related illness.

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