

## Preventing Summer Heat Illness

Summer heat waves can be dangerous. A very high body temperature can damage the brain and other vital organs. Some health conditions can make it harder for the body to stay cool in hot weather. These include old age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn and drug and alcohol use. To protect your health when temperatures are very high:

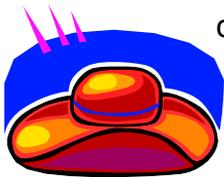
### **Get Plenty to Drink**

Sweating removes needed salt and minerals from the body. When it is hot, drink more water, juice and sports drinks. Avoid drinks with caffeine (tea, coffee, and cola) and alcohol. Be sure to eat regularly.



### **Wear Light Clothing and Sunscreen**

Wear as little clothing as possible when you are at home. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.



In the hot sun, a wide-brimmed hat will keep the head cool.

If you will be in direct sun, use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and follow package directions. Reapply every 2 hours while in the sun.



**Warning:** If your doctor limits the amount of fluid you drink or if you take water pills, ask him or her how much you should drink when the weather is hot. If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.

### **Stay Cool Indoors**

The best way to beat the heat is to stay in an air conditioned area. If you don't have an air conditioner, go to a shopping mall or public building for a few hours. A cool shower or bath is also a good way to cool off.

### **Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully**

Try to be less active during the hottest part of the day, late afternoon. If you must be out in the heat, plan your activities so that you are outdoors either before noon or in the evening. While outdoors, rest often in a shady area. Never leave kids or pets in a parked car.

### **Pace Yourself**

If you are not used to working or exercising in hot weather, start slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Take frequent, regularly scheduled breaks. If activity in the heat makes your heart pound or leaves you gasping for breath, stop activity, get into a cool or shady area, and rest. Especially if you become lightheaded, confused, weak or feel faint.

### **Use a Buddy System**

During a heat wave, check on your friends and family and have someone do the same for you. If you know someone who is elderly or has a health condition, check on them twice a day during a heat wave. Watch for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

High temperatures can cause serious health problems. Know the symptoms of heat-related illness and be ready to help.



## Treating Summer Heat Illness

**Heat stroke** happens when the body can no longer control its temperature. The body's temperature rises fast. The body cannot sweat and is unable to cool itself. Warning signs include red, hot, dry skin; very high body temperature, dizziness, nausea, confusion, strange behavior or unconsciousness, rapid pulse or throbbing headache. Heat stroke can cause death or disability if treatment is not given. What to do:

- Get medical help quickly.
- Get the victim to a shady area.
- Cool the person off with a cool shower, garden hose, etc.
- Do not give the victim fluids to drink.
- If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the hospital for further instructions.

**Heat exhaustion** is a milder illness that happens when the body has lost too much water and salt in sweat. Warning signs include heavy sweating, cramps, headache, nausea or vomiting, paleness, tiredness, weakness, dizziness and fainting. If heat exhaustion is not treated, it can turn into heat stroke. Get medical help if the symptoms are severe or if the victim has heart problems or high blood pressure. Help the victim cool off with:

- Cool, nonalcoholic beverages,
- Rest, lying down,
- Cool shower, bath or sponge bath,
- Air-conditioning,
- Lightweight clothing.

**Heat cramps** are muscle pains and spasms due to heavy activity. They usually involve the stomach muscles or the legs. It is generally thought that the loss of water and salt from heavy sweating causes the cramps. If you have heart problems or are on a low-sodium diet, get medical attention for heat cramps. What to do:

- Stop. Sit quietly in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Rest for a few hours to avoid heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Get medical help if heat cramps do not stop after one hour.

**Sunburn** is when skin becomes red, painful and unusually warm after being in the sun. Sunburn should be avoided because it damages the skin and could lead to more serious illness. What to do:

- See a doctor if the sunburn affects an infant younger than one year old or if the victim has fever, blisters or severe pain.
- Stay out of the sun.
- Bathe the sunburned area with cool water.
- Use moisturizing lotion on sunburn, do not use salve, butter or ointment.
- Do not break blisters.

### **For more information...**

Call CDC for info in English or Spanish:  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov](http://www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov)