



## Extreme Heat Awareness

During the summer months, unusually high temperatures can occur that can be a life threatening condition. Heat waves are particularly dangerous for children, the elderly, and those with chronic health conditions. Please check on your neighbors and offer them assistance. Heat related illnesses can become medical emergencies quickly – call 911.



**Heat wave.** Prolonged period of excessive heat and humidity. The National Weather Service steps up its procedures to alert the public during these periods of excessive heat and humidity.

**Heat index.** A number in degrees Fahrenheit (F) that tells how hot it really feels when relative humidity is added to the actual air temperature. Exposure to full sunshine can increase the heat index by 15° F.

**Heat cramps.** Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. Although heat cramps are the least severe, they are an early signal that the body is having trouble with the heat.

- **Treatment of heat cramps:** Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. **Do not** give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them.

**Heat exhaustion.** Heat exhaustion typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. If not treated, the victim may suffer heat stroke.

- **Signals of heat exhaustion:** Cool, moist, pale, or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. Body temperature will be near normal.

- **Treatment of heat exhaustion:** Get the person out of the heat and into a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, give cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. **Do not** give liquids that contain alcohol or caffeine. Let the victim rest in a comfortable position, and watch carefully for changes in his or her condition.

**Heat stroke.** Heat stroke is **life-threatening**. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.

- **Signals of heat stroke:** 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, skin may be wet; otherwise, it will feel dry.

- **Treatment of heat stroke:** Heat stroke is a **life-threatening situation**. Help is needed fast. Call 911 or your local emergency number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Immerse victim in a cool bath, or wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. Watch for signals of breathing problems. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the victim refuses water or is vomiting or there are changes in the level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink. **Sunstroke.** Another term for heat stroke.

### **During a heat emergency**

- Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during **the coolest part of the day**, which is usually in the **morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.**
- Stay indoors as much as possible and **limit exposure** to the sun.
- If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, out of the sunshine. Try to go to a public building with air conditioning each day for several hours.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose fitting clothes that cover as much skin as possible to prevent sunburn.
- Stay out of the sun. When in the sun, wear sunscreen, **at least SPF 15.**
- **Drink plenty of water regularly and often, even if you do not feel thirsty.**
- **Avoid** drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them. They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true about beer, which dehydrates the body.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increase metabolic heat. Also avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.
- Use a **buddy system** when working in extreme heat, and take frequent breaks.
- **Never** leave children, pets, or those who require special care in a parked car in intense summer heat.

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