

WELL BALANCED

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Healthy HABITS FOR Hot WEATHER



When the sun is shining and the weather warms up, it's the perfect time to enjoy outdoor activities. However, when temperatures soar, the heat can quickly take a toll on your health. To prevent heat-related illness, it's important to know your risks, practice healthy habits, understand the signs and symptoms, and know what to do if there is a medical emergency.

Exposure to extreme heat can lead to illnesses such as heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or worse. According to the CDC, more than 700 people die each year in the U.S. due to extreme heat. Spending extended time in high temperatures increases your risk of developing these conditions. Certain groups are more vulnerable to heat-related health problems, including:

- Infants and young children
- Pregnant women
- People with heart disease or or chronic conditions
- People age 65 or older
- Individuals who work or exercise outdoors.

Intentionally practicing healthy habits can help you stay safe in the heat—There's a lot you can do! Here are four ways to protect your health.

Keep Cool

- Stick to shaded areas as much as possible when participating in outdoor activities.
- Take breaks in air-conditioned spaces to help your body cool down.
- Use fans safely—When indoor temperatures are above 90°F, using fans alone can actually raise your body temperature instead of cooling you down.

Stay Hydrated

Staying hydrated is always important, but it's essential when spending time in hot weather, especially if you're physically active. Although the exact amount of water needed per person can vary, the recommendation, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, is 11.5 cups per day for women and 15.5 cups per day for men. When the weather is warm, listening to your body is essential—You may find you'll need to drink more water than you normally do to maintain proper hydration. To increase hydration, consider the following tips.

- Carry a refillable water bottle to make drinking water more convenient.
- Limit beverages high in sugar, caffeine, sodium, or alcohol, as they can contribute to dehydration.
- Use urine color as a hydration guide. Light yellow or clear usually indicates that you are drinking enough water.

Plan Wisely

Stay informed by watching the weather and being aware of the heat risk. Whenever possible, plan tasks and activities for the coolest parts of the day, and avoid being outside during peak heat. Look for ways to enjoy indoor activities in air-conditioned spaces to keep cool and stay safe.



Did You Know?

There are community resources, including cooling centers, to help during extreme heat. The National Center for Healthy Housing offers information on how to find these centers in your state.

According to the World Health Organization, heat stress is the leading cause of weather-related deaths. The good news is that most of the harmful risk effects of extreme heat are preventable!

Know the Signs

To avoid getting sick from overheating, it's important to recognize the warning signs. Listening to your body is key, and understanding when something doesn't feel right is essential so you can take action before it becomes serious.

Here are some initial signs:

- Muscle cramping
- Heavy sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Weakness
- Nausea.

Heat stroke is the most severe form of heat-related illness. It occurs when the body can no longer regulate its temperature because the sweating mechanism has failed, making it unable to cool itself down.

Signs of heat stroke may include:

- Confusion or disorientation
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- Profuse sweating or red, hot, dry skin
- A dangerously high body temperature

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. If you or someone you know shows signs of heat stroke, call 911 immediately. While you wait for help:

- Stay with the individual until help arrives
- Move them to a shaded area
- Begin cooling them immediately by:
 - Applying cold water or using an ice bath if available
 - Placing cold, wet cloths on their body, preferably on pulse points (head, neck, armpits, and groin), where veins are close to the skin, so cooling is more efficient
 - Soaking their clothing with cool water.

Resources

- » Cool Centers by State (nchh.org)
- » Heat-Related Illness and First Aid (osha.gov)

Sources

- » <https://www.cdc.gov/heat-health/about/index.html>
- » <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>
- » <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress/about/illnesses.html>
- » <https://www.cdc.gov/climate-health/php/resources/protect-yourself-from-the-dangers-of-extreme-heat.html>
- » <https://www.eatright.org/health/essential-nutrients/water/how-much-water-do-you-need>

