A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety
For more information on hot weather conditions and health, please contact:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Environmental Health, MS F52
4700 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717
1-888-232-6789; EHHEinq@cdc.gov
http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/

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http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/
Heat-related deaths and illness are preventable yet annually many people succumb to extreme heat. Historically, from 1979 to 1999, excessive heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths in the United States. During this period, more people in this country died from extreme heat than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. In 2001, 300 deaths were caused by excessive heat exposure.

People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool themselves. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, such as those with mental illness, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use, the body cannot cool itself properly. Exposure to high temperatures is not the only risk factor for heat-related illness. Several factors affect the body’s ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. When the humidity is high, sweat cannot evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. Conditions such as obesity, drug and alcohol use, and age increase the risk for heat-related illness.

Because heat-related deaths are preventable, people need to be aware of who is at greatest risk and what actions can be taken to prevent a heat-related illness or death. The elderly, the very young, and people with mental illness and chronic diseases are at highest risk. However, even young and healthy individuals can succumb to heat if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather.

Air-conditioning is the number one protective factor against heat-related illness and death. If a home is not air-conditioned, people can reduce their risk for heat-related illness by spending time in public facilities that are air-conditioned. Summertime activity, whether on the playing field or the construction site, must be balanced with measures that aid the body’s cooling mechanisms and prevent heat-related illness. This pamphlet tells how you can prevent, recognize, and cope with heat-related health problems.
What Is Extreme Heat?

Temperatures that hover 10 degrees or more above the average high temperature for the region and last for several weeks are defined as extreme heat. Humid or muggy conditions, which add to the discomfort of high temperatures, occur when a “dome” of high atmospheric pressure traps hazy, damp air near the ground. Excessively dry and hot conditions can provoke dust storms and low visibility. Droughts occur when a long period passes without substantial rainfall. A heat wave combined with a drought is a very dangerous situation.

During Hot Weather

To protect your health when temperatures are extremely high, remember to keep cool and use common sense. The following tips are important:

Drink Plenty of Fluids

During hot weather you will need to increase your fluid intake, regardless of your activity level. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink two to four glasses (16–32 ounces) of cool fluids each hour.

Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask how much you should drink while the weather is hot. Don’t drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar—these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.

Plan Ahead

Prepare for extremely cold weather every winter—it’s always a possibility. There are steps you can take in advance for greater wintertime safety in your home and in your car.

Emergency Supplies List:

- an alternate way to heat your home during a power failure:
  - dry firewood for a fireplace or wood stove, or
  - kerosene for a kerosene heater
- furnace fuel (coal, propane, or oil)
- electric space heater with automatic shut-off switch and non-glowing elements
- blankets
- matches
- multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher
- first aid kit and instruction manual
- flashlight or battery-powered lantern
- battery-powered radio
- battery-powered clock or watch
- extra batteries
- non-electric can opener
- snow shovel
- rock salt
- special needs items (diapers, hearing aid batteries, medications, etc.)

Winter Survival Kit for Your Home

Keep several days’ supply of these items:

- Food that needs no cooking or refrigeration, such as bread, crackers, cereal, canned foods, and dried fruits. Remember baby food and formula if you have young children.
- Water stored in clean containers, or purchased bottled water (5 gallons per person) in case your water pipes freeze and rupture.
- Medicines that any family member may need. If your area is prone to long periods of cold temperatures, or if your home is isolated, stock additional amounts of food, water, and medicine.

Emergency Supplies List:

- Food
- Water
- Medicines
- Other supplies

Remember, a well-stocked survival kit can save your life in the event of an emergency or disaster.
Replace Salt and Minerals

Heavy sweating removes salt and minerals from the body. These are necessary for your body and must be replaced. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, non-alcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. However, if you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage or taking salt tablets.

Wear Appropriate Clothing and Sunscreen

Wear as little clothing as possible when you are at home. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Sunburn affects your body’s ability to cool itself and causes a heat stroke. Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) along with sunglasses, and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say “broad spectrum” or “UV A/UVB protection” on their labels) 30 minutes prior to going out. Continue to reapply it according to the package directions.

Prepare Your Home for Winter

Although periods of extreme cold cannot always be predicted far in advance, weather forecasts can sometimes provide several days’ notice. Listen to weather forecasts regularly, and check your emergency supplies whenever a period of extreme cold is predicted.

If you plan to use a fireplace or wood stove for emergency heating, have your chimney or flue inspected each year. Ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector, or find one in the yellow pages of your telephone directory under “chimney cleaning.”

Also, if you’ll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated. Test them monthly, and replace batteries twice yearly.

Your ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age, and older people are more susceptible to health problems caused by cold. If you are over 65 years old, place an emergency telephone number in your home. Place a thermostat in an indoor location where you will see it frequently, and check the temperature of your home often during the winter months.

Wrap any water lines that run along exterior walls so your water supply will be less likely to freeze. To the extent possible, weatherproof your home by adding weather-stripping, insulation, insulated doors and storm windows, or thermal-pane windows.

If you have pets, bring them indoors. If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure they have access to unfrozen water.

Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully

If you must be outdoors, try to limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours. Try to rest often in shady areas so that your body’s thermostat will have a chance to recover.

Pace Yourself

If you are not accustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment, start slowly and pick up the pace gradually. If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, STOP all activity. Get into a cool area or at least into the shade, and rest, especially if you become lightheaded, confused, weak, or faint.

During the winter months your thermoregulatory center (the part of your brain that controls heat) will become more active. Keep your home warm, but don’t overdo it by baking cookies or turning up the heat excessively. If you feel too warm, take off a layer of clothing. If you feel too cold, add a layer of clothing. Make sure you can see any emergency exit signs and know where the main electrical switches are located.

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Stay Cool Indoors

Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library—even a few hours spent in an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off. Use your stove and oven less to maintain a cooler temperature in your home.

Use a Buddy System

When working in the heat, monitor the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness. If you are 65 years of age or older, have a friend or relative call to check on you twice a day during a heat wave. If you know someone in this age group, check on them at least twice a day.

Monitor Those at High Risk

Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others.

• Infants and children up to four years of age are sensitive to the effects of high temperatures and rely on others to regulate their environments and provide adequate liquids.
• People 65 years of age or older may not compensate for heat stress efficiently and are less likely to sense and respond to change in temperature.
• People who are overweight may be prone to heat sickness because of their tendency to retain more body heat.
• People who overexert during work or exercise may become dehydrated and susceptible to heat sickness.
• People who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications, such as for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation, may be affected by extreme heat.

Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching.

Prepare Your Car for Winter

You can avoid many dangerous winter travel problems by planning ahead. Have maintenance service on your vehicle as often as the manufacturer recommends. In addition, every fall:

• Have the radiator system serviced, or check the antifreeze level yourself with an antifreeze tester. Add antifreeze, as needed.
• Replace windshield-wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture.
• Replace any worn tires, and check the air pressure in the tires.
• During winter, keep the gas tank near full to help avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.

Winter Survival Kit for Your Car

Equip your car with these items:

• blankets
• first aid kit
• a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for water)
• windshield scraper
• booster cables
• road maps
• mobile phone
• compass
• tool kit
• paper towels
• bag of sand or cat litter (to pour on ice or snow for added traction)
• tow rope
• tire chains (in areas with heavy snow)
• collapsible shovel
• container of water and high-calorie canned or dried foods and a can opener
• flashlight and extra batteries
• canned compressed air with sealant (for emergency tire repair)
• brightly colored cloth

Visit your local home improvement stores or the automotive sections of your local grocery stores for more information and advice.
Adjust to the Environment

Be aware that any sudden change in temperature, such as an early summer heat wave, will be stressful to your body. You will have a greater tolerance for heat if you limit your physical activity until you become accustomed to the heat. If you travel to a hotter climate, allow several days to become acclimated before attempting any vigorous exercise, and work up to it gradually.

Use Common Sense

Remember to keep cool and use common sense:
• Avoid hot foods and heavy meals—they add heat to your body.
• Drink plenty of fluids and replace salts and minerals in your body.
• Dress infants and children in cool, loose clothing and shade their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella.
• Limit sun exposure during mid-day hours and in places of potential severe exposure such as beaches.
• Do not leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car.
• Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets, and leave the water in a shady area.

Indoor Safety

Heat Your Home Safely

If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions as well as the home safety measures on page 3, and remember these safety tips:
• Use fireplace, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside and do not leak flue gas into the indoor air space.
• Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
• Ensure adequate ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater.
• Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use—don’t substitute.
• Do not place a space heater within 3 feet of anything that may catch on fire, such as drapes, furniture, or bedding, and never cover your space heater.
• Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
• Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
• Make sure that the cord of an electric space heater is not a tripping hazard but do not run the cord under carpets or rugs.
• Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.
• If your space heater has a damaged electrical cord or produces sparks, do not use it.
• Store a multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher near the area to be heated.
• Protect yourself from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by installing a battery-operated CO detector and never using generators, grills, camp stoves, or similar devices indoors.

Light and Cook Safely

If there is a power failure:
• Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns rather than candles, if possible.
• Never leave lit candles unattended.
• Never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors—the fumes are deadly.
• Never use an electric generator indoors, inside the garage, or near the air intake of your house because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
• Plug in appliances to the generator using individual heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords.
• Do not use the generator or appliances if they are wet because of the risk of electrocution.
• Do not store gasoline indoors where the fumes could ignite.
Hot Weather Health Emergencies

Even short periods of high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Doing too much on a hot day, spending too much time in the sun or staying too long in an overheated place can cause heat-related illnesses. Know the symptoms of heat disorders and overexposure to the sun, and be ready to give first aid treatment.

Heat Stroke
Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature. The body’s temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. Body temperature may rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Recognizing Heat Stroke
Warning signs of heat stroke vary but may include the following:
- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F, orally)
- Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

Heat Stroke

Keep a Water Supply
Extreme cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes rupture. When very cold temperatures are expected:
- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- Keep the indoor temperature warm.
- Improve the circulation of heated air near pipes. For example, open kitchen cabinet doors beneath the kitchen sink.

If your pipes do freeze, do not thaw them with a torch. Instead, thaw them slowly by directing the warm air from an electric hair dryer onto the pipes.

If you cannot thaw your pipes, or the pipes are ruptured, use bottled water or get water from a neighbor’s home. As an emergency measure—if no other water is available—snow can be melted for water. Bringing water to a rolling

Conserve Heat

You may need fresh air coming in for your heater or for emergency cooking arrangements. However, if you don’t need extra ventilation, keep as much heat as possible inside your home. Shut off the air vents in unneeded rooms, stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors, and close draperies or cover windows with blankets at night.

Monitor Body Temperature
Infants less than one year old should never sleep in a cold room because (1) infants lose body heat more easily...
What to Do
If you see any of these signs, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the victim. Do the following:

• Get the victim to a shady area.
• Cool the victim rapidly using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the victim in a tub of cool water; place the person in a cool shower; spray the victim with cool water; or if the humidity is low, wrap the victim in a cool, wet sheet and fan him or her vigorously.
• Monitor body temperature, and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101–102°F.
• If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instructions.
• Do not give the victim fluids to drink.
• Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

Sometimes a victim’s muscles will begin to twitch uncontrollably as a result of heat stroke. If this happens, keep the victim from injuring himself, but do not place any object in the mouth and do not give fluids. If there is vomiting, make sure the airway remains open by turning the victim on his or her side.

Heat Exhaustion
Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. It is the body’s response to an excessive loss of the water and salt contained in sweat. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly people, people with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Eat and Drink Wisely
Eating well-balanced meals will help you stay warmer. Do not drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages—they cause your body to lose heat more rapidly. Instead, drink warm, sweet beverages or broth to help maintain your body temperature. If you have any dietary restrictions, ask your doctor.

Outdoor Safety
When the weather is extremely cold, and especially if there are high winds, try to stay indoors. Make any trips outside as brief as possible, and remember these tips to protect your health and safety:

Dress Warmly and Stay Dry
Adults and children should wear:
• a hat
• a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth
• sleeves that are snug at the wrist
• mittens (they are warmer than gloves)
• a water-resistant coat and boots
• several layers of loose-fitting clothing

Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind. Wool, silk, or polypropylene inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton. Stay dry—wet clothing can double your body-heat loss.

Sometimes come in more
Your body may feel as though it’s running a fever, but it’s not. Your skin may feel warm or hot to the touch; this is your body trying to cool itself. It’s normal. Keep it warm by drinking warm liquids, staying covered, keeping your skin dry, and moving to a warmer room when you can.

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Recognizing Heat Exhaustion
Warning signs of heat exhaustion include the following:
- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness

The skin may be cool and moist. The victim’s pulse rate will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heatstroke. Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following occurs:
- Symptoms are severe
- The victim has heart problems or high blood pressure

Otherwise, help the victim to cool off, and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than 1 hour.

What to Do
Cooling measures that may be effective include the following:
- Cool, nonalcoholic beverages, as directed by your physician
- Rest
- Cool shower, bath, or sponge bath
- An air-conditioned environment
- Lightweight clothing

Heat Cramps
Heat cramps usually affect people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body’s salt and moisture. The low salt level in the muscles causes painful cramps. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.

Recognizing Heat Cramps
Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms—usually in the abdomen, arms, or legs—that may occur in association with strenuous activity. If you have heart problems or are on a low-sodium diet, get medical attention for heat cramps.
What to Do

If medical attention is not necessary, take these steps:

- Stop all activity, and sit quietly in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside, because further exertion may lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Seek medical attention for heat cramps if they do not subside in 1 hour.

Sunburn

Sunburn should be avoided because it damages the skin. Although the discomfort is usually minor and healing often occurs in about a week, a more severe sunburn may require medical attention.

Recognizing Sunburn

Symptoms of sunburn are well known: the skin becomes red, painful, and abnormally warm after sun exposure.

What to Do

Consult a doctor if the sunburn affects an infant younger than 1 year of age.

Also, remember these tips when treating sunburn:

- Avoid repeated sun exposure.
- Apply cold compresses or immerse the sunburned area in cool water.
- Apply moisturizing lotion to affected areas. Do not use salve, butter, or ointment.
- Do not break blisters.

Be Cautious About Travel

- Listen for radio or television reports of travel advisories issued by the National Weather Service.
- Do not travel in low visibility conditions.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges if at all possible.
- If you must travel, let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive. Ask them to notify authorities if you are late.
- Check and restock the winter emergency supplies in your car before you leave.
- Never pour water on your windshield to remove ice or snow; shattering may occur.
- Don’t rely on a car to provide sufficient heat; the car may break down.
- Always carry additional warm clothing appropriate for the winter conditions.
Heat Rash

Heat rash is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather. It can occur at any age but is most common in young children.

Recognizing Heat Rash

Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. It is more likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts, and in elbow creases.

What to Do

The best treatment for heat rash is to provide a cooler, less humid environment. Keep the affected area dry. Dusting powder may be used to increase comfort, but avoid using ointments or creams—they keep the skin warm and moist and may make the condition worse.

Treating heat rash is simple and usually does not require medical assistance. Other heat-related problems can be much more severe.

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Staying in your vehicle when stranded is often the safest choice if winter storms create poor visibility or if roadways are ice covered. These steps will increase your safety when stranded:

1. Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna as a signal to rescuers and raise the hood of the car (if it is not snowing).
2. Move all your belongings from the trunk into the passenger area.
3. Wrap your entire body, including your head, in extra clothing, blankets, or newspapers.
4. Stay awake. You will be less vulnerable to cold-related health problems.
5. Run the motor (and heater) for about 10 minutes per hour, opening one window slightly to let in air. Make sure that snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe—this will reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
6. As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to improve your circulation and stay warmer.
7. Do not eat unmelted snow because it will lower your body temperature.
8. Huddle with other people for warmth.

Cold-Weather Health Emergencies

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. The most common cold-related problems are hypothermia and frostbite.

Hypothermia

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures can result in hypothermia, which is the lowering of your body temperature below normal levels. Hypothermia is particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and won’t be able to do anything about it.

Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water.
One Last Hot Tip…

These self-help measures are not a substitute for medical care but may help you to recognize and respond promptly to warning signs of trouble. Your best defense against heat-related illness is prevention. Staying cool and making simple changes in your fluid intake, activities, and clothing during hot weather can help you to remain safe and healthy.

Victims of hypothermia are often (1) elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; (2) babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; (3) people who remain outdoors for long periods—the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.; and (4) people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.

Recognizing Hypothermia

Warning signs of hypothermia:

**What to Do**

If you notice any of these signs, get the person’s temperature. If it is below 95°, the situation is an emergency—get medical attention immediately.

If medical care is not available, begin warming the person, as follows:

- Get the victim into a warm room or shelter.
- If the victim has on any wet clothing, remove it.
- Warm the center of the body first—chest, neck, head, and groin—using an electric blanket, if available. Or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels, or sheets.
- Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature, but do not give alcoholic beverages. Do not try to give beverages to an unconscious person.
- After body temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible.

A person with severe hypothermia may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or to be breathing. In this case, handle the victim gently, and get emergency care while you are warming the victim. CPR should continue while the victim is being warmed, until the victim responds or medical aid becomes available. In some cases, hypothermia victims who appear to be dead can be successfully resuscitated.

**Warning signs that may occur:**

- Adults:
  - shivering, exhaustion
  - confusion, fumbling hands
  - memory loss, slurred speech
  - drowsiness
- Infants:
  - bright red, cold skin
  - very low energy