



TERMS TO KNOW

HEAT WAVE: More than 48 hours of high heat (90 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) and high humidity (80% relative humidity or higher) are expected.

HEAT INDEX: A number in degrees Fahrenheit 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 degrees.

HEAT HEALTH HAZARDS

HEAT CRAMPS: Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms caused by heavy exertion. Signals are abdominal and leg muscle pain. Loss of water and salt from sweating causes cramping. Relief can be firm pressure on cramping muscles, or gentle massages to relieve cramping.

HEAT EXHAUSTION: This condition is less dangerous than heat stroke. It usually occurs when people exercise too heavily or work in warm, humid places where body fluids are lost. Signals include cool, moist, pale or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness and exhaustion. If symptoms occur, get the victim out of sun, and apply cool, wet cloths.

HEAT STROKE: This condition is also known as sunstroke, which can be life threatening. Body temperature can rise and cause brain damage; death may result if not cooled quickly. Signals include hot, red and dry skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse, and shallow breathing. Relief for lowering body temperature can be with a cold bath or sponge.

SUNBURN: Redness and pain; in severe cases, swelling of skin, blisters, fever, and headaches. Sunburn hampers heat dissipation. Ointments can be a relief for pain in mild cases. A physician should see serious cases.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Slow down on strenuous activity and exercise, especially during the sun's peak hours – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Exercise should be done in the early morning between 4-7a.m.

- Eat less protein and more fruits and vegetables. Protein produces and increases metabolic heat, which causes water loss. Eat small meals, but eat more often. Do not eat salty foods.
- If possible, stay out of the sun and stay in air-conditioning. Sunburn slows the skin's ability to cool itself. The sun will also heat the inner core of your body, resulting in dehydration. If you must go outdoors, when in the sun wear sunscreen with a high sun protector factor rating (at least SPF 15) and a hat to protect your face and head.
- Dress appropriately. When outdoors, wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing that will cover as much skin as possible. Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects the heat and sunlight and helps maintain normal body temperature. Cover as much skin as possible to avoid sunburn and over-warming effects of sunlight on your body.
- Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, out of the sunshine. Even in the warmest weather, staying indoors, out of the sunshine, is safer than long periods of exposure to the sun.
- If your home is not air-conditioned, go to a public building with air conditioning each day for several hours. Air-conditioned locations are the safest places during extreme heat because electric fans do not cool the air. Fans do help sweat evaporate, which gives a cooling effect.
- Drink plenty of fluids, particularly water (at least 2-4 glasses of water per hour during extreme heat), even if you do not feel thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool. Avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician. Salt causes the body to retain fluids, resulting in swelling. Salt affects areas of your body that help you sweat, which would keep you cool. Persons on salt-restrictive diets should check with a physician before increasing salt intake.
- Never leave children, pets, or those who require special care in a parked car or vehicle during periods of intense summer heat. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle can reach over 140 degrees Fahrenheit quickly. Exposure to such high temperatures can kill within a matter of minutes.
- Make a special effort to check on your neighbors during a heat wave, especially if they are elderly, have young children or have special needs.

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE AWARE

Elderly persons and small children are mostly affected.

- Persons with weight or alcohol problems are very susceptible to heat reactions.
- Persons on certain medications or drugs.

Monitor those at high risk. Infants and children up to four years of age are sensitive to the effects of high temperatures. They rely on others to regulate their environments and provide adequate liquids.

People who are 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.

Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications for conditions such as 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 need much more frequent watching.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND POWER OUTAGES

Power outages are more likely to occur during warm weather, when utility usage is at its peak. To avoid putting a strain on the power grid, residents are urged to conserve energy to help prevent power disruptions.

- Set your air conditioner thermostat no lower than 78 degrees.
- Only use the air conditioner when you are home. If you want to cool your home before you return, set a timer to have it switch on no more than a half-hour before you arrive.
- Turn non-essential appliances off.
- Only use appliances that have heavy electrical loads early in the morning or very late at night.