



Keep Your Cool During Summer Heat

Summertime heat can be dangerous for anyone. Some people are at risk of serious health effects – even death – from getting overheated. Here’s what you need to know about the effects of hot weather and what you can do to keep cool.

What should I do before a heat wave?

- Know the symptoms of heat-related illnesses (see table, right).
- Make sure that you can open your windows and/or that your air conditioner is working properly.
- Find out where to cool down – ask local officials about cooling centers in your area. If there are none, identify air-conditioned buildings where you can go (such as libraries, malls, supermarkets, or friends’ homes).
- Choose someone that you can call for help or who can check on you.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to learn more about medications that might make you sensitive to the sun or heat.



Overheated?

Heat-related illnesses occur when the body is unable to cool itself. The most common heat-related illnesses are heat stroke (sun stroke), heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash. Here are the symptoms and first-aid responses.

Illness	Symptoms	What to Do
Heat stroke (sun stroke) This is an EMERGENCY! Act FAST!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot, dry, red skin • Rapid pulse • High body temperature $\geq 105^{\circ}\text{F}$ • Loss of alertness • Confusion • Unconsciousness or coma • Rapid and shallow breathing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 911 immediately. • Cool the person quickly. • Bring to a cool place and use a cool bath or sponges, fans and AC. <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap ice packs in cloth and place on neck, wrists, ankles and armpits. <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove clothing and wrap the person in cool, wet sheets.
Heat exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy sweating • Fainting • Vomiting • Cold, pale, clammy skin • Dizziness • Headache • Nausea • Weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat exhaustion can quickly lead to heat stroke so if symptoms worsen or don’t improve get medical help. • Move the person to a cool place. • Loosen clothes and apply cool, wet cloths to the neck, face and arms. • Have the person sip water slowly. Provide half a glass of water every 15 minutes up to about 1 quart. Stop giving water if vomiting occurs.
Heat cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle cramps in the abdominal area or extremities • Heavy sweating • Mild nausea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move the person to a cool place. • Apply firm pressure to the cramping muscle. • Gently stretch the cramped muscle and hold it for 20 seconds followed by gentle massage. • Have the person drink some cool water.
Heat rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin irritation that looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move the person to a cool place. • Keep the affected area dry. • Have the person use talcum powder to increase comfort.

What can I do during a heat wave?

- Use air conditioning to cool down or go to an air-conditioned building.
- If you don't have air conditioning in your home, open windows and shades on the shady side and close them on the sunny side to try to cool it down.
- Drink plenty of fluids but avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks.
- Beat the heat with cool showers and baths.
- Take regular breaks from physical activity.
- Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day (between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.).
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing to help keep cool.
- Stay out of the sun as much as possible.
- Wear sunscreen and a ventilated hat (e.g., straw or mesh) when in the sun, even if it is cloudy.
- Never leave children, pets or those with special needs in a parked car, even briefly. Temperatures in the car can become dangerous within a few minutes.
- Check on your neighbors, family and friends, especially those who are elderly or have special needs.



Conserve water and power during heat waves

- Set your thermostat no lower than 78° F.
- Only use air conditioning in rooms that you are occupying.
- Turn off lights and non-essential appliances when they are not in use.
- Only run dishwashers and washing machines when they are full and during hours of low energy demand (between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.).
- Only water your lawn in the early morning or evening hours.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator (so that you do not have to let the tap run while waiting for it to cool).
- Defrost food in the refrigerator overnight or in the microwave (instead of running water to thaw it).
- Take short showers.
- Only fill the tub halfway when bathing.
- Turn off the tap while you are brushing your teeth.

Who is most at risk from the heat?

- Older adults
- Young children
- People who are overweight/obese
- People who do not perspire normally
- People with some chronic medical conditions such as history of dehydration, heart problems and respiratory or lung problems
- People who work outdoors or in hot settings
- People who take certain medications that cause sensitivity to the sun or interfere with the body's ability to sweat and stay cool. Some medicines that affect the body's cooling system include antihistamines, antidepressants, over-the-counter sleeping pills, anti-diarrhea pills, beta blockers, anti-Parkinson's drugs and psychiatric drugs. Do not stop taking medication unless instructed to do so by your doctor.

For more information

New York State Department of Health
Center for Environmental Health
800-458-1158

www.nyhealth.gov

CDC's Extreme Heat website

emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat

Environmental Protection Agency's
(EPA's) Aging Initiative

www.epa.gov/aging

EPA's Heat Island

www.epa.gov/heatisland

National Weather Service's Heat Index

www.nws.noaa.gov/om/heat/index.shtml

Heat Wave Awareness Project

www.isse.ucar.edu/heat/web.html