

Preventing heat emergencies

Many people enjoy the hot weather, but when your body is unable to cool itself properly, you could develop a heat-related illness. Most of these conditions are mild, but heatstroke (also called sunstroke) can be life threatening. The tips in this handout will help you to minimize your risk. And if you have children, remember this: Never leave kids unattended in a car with the windows closed in the heat.

When the mercury rises:

- Stay indoors in an air-conditioned place. If your home isn't air-conditioned, go to a public place that is, such as a library or shopping mall, or call your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area. Even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help you stay cooler when you go back into the heat.
- Drink plenty of cool fluids, but avoid drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine because they actually cause you to lose more body fluid. (If your doctor has limited how much fluid you should normally drink, ask him how much you should drink when it's hot out.)
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes.
- Take a cool shower or bath.

If you must go out in the heat, be sure to:

- Limit your outdoor activity to the early morning or the evening.
- Cut down on exercise.
- Drink between two and four glasses (16 – 32 ounces) of non-alcoholic, caffeine-free beverages if you're going to be active (unless, of course, your doctor tells you otherwise).
- Protect yourself by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Also, put on sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- Rest often in shaded areas.

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Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Tips for preventing heat-related illness." 2004. www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat-tips.asp (18 Mar. 2005).

