



Preventing Summer Heat Illness

Summer heat waves can be dangerous. A very high body temperature can damage the brain and other vital organs. Some health conditions can make it harder for the body to stay cool in hot weather. These include old age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn and drug and alcohol use. To protect your health when temperatures are very high:

Get Plenty to Drink

Sweating removes needed salt and minerals from the body. When it is hot, drink more water, juice and sports drinks. Avoid drinks with caffeine (tea, coffee, and cola) and alcohol. Be sure to eat regularly.



Wear Light Clothing and Sunscreen

Wear as little clothing as possible when you are at home. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. In the hot sun, a wide-brimmed hat will keep the head cool.



If you will be in direct sun, use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and follow package directions. Reapply every 2 hours while in the sun.



Warning: If your doctor limits the amount of fluid you drink or if you take water pills, ask him or her how much you should drink when the weather is hot. If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.

Stay Cool Indoors

The best way to beat the heat is to stay in an air conditioned area. If you don't have an air conditioner, go to a shopping mall or public building for a few hours. A cool shower or bath is also a good way to cool off.

Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully

Try to be less active during the hottest part of the day, late afternoon. If you must be out in the heat, plan your activities so that you are outdoors either before noon or in the evening. While outdoors, rest often in a shady area. Never leave kids or pets in a parked car.

Pace Yourself

If you are not used to working or exercising in hot weather, start slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Take frequent, regularly scheduled breaks. If activity in the heat makes your heart pound or leaves you gasping for breath, stop activity, get into a cool or shady area, and rest. Especially if you become lightheaded, confused, weak or feel faint.

Use a Buddy System

During a heat wave, check on your friends and family and have someone do the same for you. If you know someone who is elderly or has a health condition, check on them twice a day during a heat wave. Watch for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

High temperatures can cause serious health problems. Know the symptoms of heat-related illness and be ready to help.

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