



101 Critical Days of Summer

Safety Tip #7 - Beat The Heat



From Abbotsford, BC, to Zephyrhills, FL, summer heat and humidity can be a serious problem for all types of people.

Becoming overheated goes far beyond causing people discomfort. It can be deadly. And temperatures don't need to be unbearably hot in order to spell trouble for people performing physical activities.

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, sweating just isn't enough. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.

Several factors affect the body's ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. When the humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. Other conditions related to risk include age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use.

You need to take measures to ensure that you and your family have access to water and shade and take periodic breaks to prevent heat illness. People should also wear loose-fitting, light clothing, along with hats to protect their heads.

High temperatures, humidity, insufficient water intake and physical exertion can quickly lead to heat-related illness. There are various forms of heat illness. From least-serious to most-serious, they include:

- ⊗ **Heat rash:** This is the most common problem. Skin that is moist with sweat can break out in a reddish pimple-like cluster or small blisters, especially on the neck, upper chest, groin or in elbow creases. Dusting powder may be applied to reduce discomfort. The situation usually resolves itself after the worker moves to a cooler, drier environment.
- ⊗ **Heat cramps:** Physical labor in a hot environment, especially when coupled with insufficient water intake, can cause people to develop an electrolyte imbalance that results in painful cramps in muscles fatigued by heavy labor. The solution is to drink water every 15 to 20 minutes and supplement fluid intake with sport drinks that restore a worker's electrolyte balance.
- ⊗ **Heat exhaustion:** This is a more serious condition in which excessive heat and insufficient fluid intake cause headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness, fainting and giddiness. People with these symptoms need to be taken to a cool area to rest and be provided water. Ice packs are also recommended to cool the worker.

Heat stroke: The most serious heat illness, heat stroke occurs when the body loses its ability to regulate temperature. Without expert medical help, the victim may easily die. Symptoms include confusion, irrational behavior, hot and dry skin, a lack of sweating, loss of consciousness and convulsions. Medical help must be summoned immediately. Before help arrives, the victim should be taken to a shady, cool area. Clothing should be removed and the person should be doused with cool water, fanned and given water to drink as soon as possible.



How to Beat The Heat.....

Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. It is also a good idea to wear hats or to use an umbrella.

Drink water. Carry water or juice with you and drink continuously even if you do not feel thirsty. **Avoid alcohol and caffeine,** which dehydrate the body. 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.

Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid high-protein foods, which increase metabolic heat.

Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 and 7 a.m.

Stay indoors when possible. If air-conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine. Remember that electric fans do not cool, they simply circulate the air. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library—even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.

Use a Buddy System. When working or exercising in the heat, monitor the condition of your buddy and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness.

Be a good neighbor. During heat waves, check in on elderly residents in your neighborhood and those who do not have air conditioning at least twice a day, just to be sure they're ok.

Learn Red Cross first aid and CPR.

Do Not Leave Children or Pets in Cars

Even in cool temperatures, cars can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly. Even with the windows cracked open, interior temperatures can rise almost 20 degrees Fahrenheit within the first 10 minutes. Anyone left inside is at risk for serious heat-related illnesses or even death. Children who are left unattended in parked cars are at greatest risk for heat stroke, and possibly death. When traveling with children, remember to do the following:

- ⊗ Never leave infants, children or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open.
- ⊗ To remind yourself that a child is in the car, keep a stuffed animal in the car seat. When the child is buckled in, place the stuffed animal in the front with the driver.
- ⊗ When leaving your car, check to be sure everyone is out of the car. Do not overlook any children who have fallen asleep in the car.

Information about the Heat Index:
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/heat/index.shtml>



Heat Stress:
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>

Pet Safety:
http://www.myfoxny.com/dpp/good_day_ny/pet-heat-safety-tips-20100706



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