



## DELAWARE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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*Coordinating community resources to mitigate, prepare, respond and recover from Emergencies and Disasters*

### What to Do During Extreme Heat

Extreme heat kills by pushing the human body beyond its limits. Under normal conditions, the body's internal thermostat produces perspiration that evaporates and cools the body. However, in extreme heat and high humidity, evaporation is slowed and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal temperature. Most heat disorders occur because the victim has been overexposed to heat or has over-exercised for his or her age and physical condition. Know if you are at a particularly high risk for a heat emergency and take appropriate protective measures.

#### Stay in touch:

- NEVER leave animals, children, or the elderly inside a vehicle! Even if you are just leaving the vehicle for a minute and have all the windows rolled down, it is extremely dangerous to leave anyone inside a vehicle during summer temperatures.
- Use the buddy system when working in extreme heat, and take frequent breaks.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who do not have air conditioning and who spend much of their time alone.

#### Keep yourself hydrated and nourished:

- Drink more fluids, regardless of your activity level. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink. If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Do not drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar or caffeine. They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true about beer, which dehydrates the body. Also avoid very cold drinks to preempt stomach cramps.
- Eat small meals and eat more frequently. Avoid foods that are high in protein which increase metabolic heat. Although heat lessens your appetite, your body needs proper nutrition to function.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.

Take it easy:

- 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 4:00am and 7:00am.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the movie theatre, 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. Call your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.

Protect your body:

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors reflect away the sun's heat.
- Wear proper SPF sunscreen for your skin type.
- Protect your face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.
- Know the symptoms of and how to respond to heat emergencies.

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