

When temperatures soar, keep cool

With hot temperatures expected over the next few days, Public Health is urging residents to protect themselves from the heat.

“Heat-related problems are preventable,” said Dr. Alan Melnick, Clark County Health Officer. “We are encouraging people to avoid or limit physical activity outdoors, take shelter in air-conditioned buildings such as malls or libraries, and to drink plenty of fluids. Elderly people and young children are especially vulnerable during periods of intense or prolonged heat.”

Important hot weather tips

- Drink more fluids (non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated), regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Limit intake of liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar—these may cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they may cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to a 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.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially young children. This applies to pets as well.
- 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.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Although anyone may suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others.

Check regularly on:

- Infants and young children.
 - People 65 or older.
 - Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure.
- Visit at-risk adults at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children need much more frequent watching.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, avoid the midday hours and drink two to four glasses of cool, non alcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage may replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say “broad spectrum” or “UVA/UVB protection” on their labels).

Heat stroke

Heat stroke may cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Warning signs of heat stroke vary but may include the following:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F, orally)
- Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

If you see any of these signs, have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the victim. This can be done by placing the victim in a tub of cool water or in a cool shower, by spraying the victim with cool water from a garden hose, sponging with with cool water, wrapping in a cool, wet sheet and fanning vigorously. Do not give fluids to drink. If emergency help is delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instructions.

Heat exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures. It is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt in sweat. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly people, people with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion include the following:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

The skin may be cool and moist. The victim's pulse will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke. Seek medical attention immediately if symptoms are severe or if the victim has heart problems or high blood pressure. Otherwise, help the victim cool off and provide cool, non alcoholic beverages. Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour.

Heat cramps

Heat cramps usually affect people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture. The low salt level in the muscles causes painful cramps.

Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion. Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms—usually in the abdomen, arms, or legs—that may occur in association with strenuous activity. If you have heart problems or are on a low-sodium diet, get medical attention for heat cramps.

If medical attention does not appear necessary, take these steps:

- Stop all activity, and sit quietly in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside, because further exertion may lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Seek medical attention for heat cramps if they do not subside in one hour.