

Staying Safe In Extreme Heat

You may have heard meteorologists use the term “extreme heat” - which is a period of two to three days of above 90 degrees Fahrenheit or temperatures that are much hotter and/or humid than average. The other term meteorologists use is “heat index” - which is a measure of how hot it feels when air temperature is combined with relative humidity. Per Dr. Della-Giustina, a Yale emergency medicine specialist, when humidity rises, sweat doesn’t evaporate as quickly and the body isn’t able to release heat as efficiently. For example, if the temperature is 85 degrees and the humidity is high, it can feel like 100 degrees and you may not be able to offload the heat, which can lead to heat illness.

What is Heat Illness?

Heat illness is a range of conditions including heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Heat illness can also lead to damage of the brain and other organs.



- **Heat Rash.** Heat rash can be red clusters of small, pimple like blisters that can form when sweat is trapped under the skin. Heat rash can appear in elbow creases, chest, or neck creating a stinging or prickly feeling.
- **Heat Cramps.** Heat cramps are painful and can occur then the body gets too hot.
- **Heat Exhaustion.** Heat exhaustion is a more severe version of heat illness with symptoms including heavy sweating; cold, pale, and clammy skin; a fast and weak pulse; nausea and dizziness.
- **Heat Stroke.** Heat stroke is life threatening and occurs when the body temperature rises to about 104 degrees and loses its ability to adequately cool itself down through sweating. Symptoms of heat stroke include confusion (an altered mental state with jumbled speech); hot, dry skin; vomiting; profuse sweating; seizures; and loss of consciousness. Heat stroke can be fatal if not treated right away.

Protecting Yourself from Heat Illness

Tips to protecting yourself from heat illness include:

- Try to limit outdoor activities when it is the coolest like early morning and evening hours.
- If you have to be outdoors, make time to rest in a shady area so that your body has a chance to recover.
- If you are not accustomed to working or exercising outdoors, start slowly and gradually pick up the pace.
- Because sunburn can affect your body's ability to cool down and can make you dehydrated, it is important to wear a UVA/UVB broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher. Remember to apply the sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside and reapply according to package directions.
- Stay away from sugary or alcoholic drinks as they can make you lose more body fluid.
- Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water and avoid very cold drinks as they may cause stomach cramps.
- Because heavy sweating can cause you to lose salt and other minerals from your body, it is important to replace them. Sports drinks mixed with water can help restore salt and other minerals. However, if you are on a low salt diet, have high blood pressure, diabetes, or other chronic health conditions, it is important to talk to your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.
- When working in the heat, monitor the condition of your co-workers and have them do the same for you to help identify any signs of heat illness.

<https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;>

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/how-to-stay-safe-in-the-extreme-heat>

<https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/prevention/index.html>

