

## Health Tips: Avoid Over Heating

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Too much heat is not safe for anyone. It is important to get relief from the heat quickly. If not, you might begin to feel confused or faint. Your heart could become stressed and maybe stop beating.

Your body is always working to keep a balance between how much heat it makes and how much it loses. Too much heat causes sweating. When the sweat dries from your skin, the surface of your body cools, and your temperature goes down.

But being hot for too long can be a problem. It can cause several illnesses, all grouped under the name *hyperthermia* (hy-per-ther-mee-uh).

- **Heat syncope** is a sudden dizziness that may happen when you are active during hot weather. If you take a kind of heart medication called a beta blocker or are unused to hot weather, you are even more likely to feel faint. Drinking water, putting your legs up, and resting in a cool place should make the dizzy feeling go away.
- **Heat cramps** are the painful tightening of muscles in your stomach, arms, or legs. Cramps can result from hard work or exercise. While your body temperature and pulse usually stay normal during heat cramps, your skin may feel moist and cool. These cramps are a sign that you are too hot. Find a way to cool your body down. Rest in the shade or in a cool building. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, but not those with alcohol or caffeine (coffee, tea, and some sodas).
- **Heat edema** is a swelling in your ankles and feet when you get hot. Putting your legs up should help. If that doesn't work fairly quickly, check with your doctor.
- **Heat exhaustion** is a warning that your body can no longer keep itself cool. You might feel thirsty, dizzy, weak, uncoordinated, and nauseated. You

may sweat a lot. Even though your body temperature stays normal, your skin feels cold and clammy. Some people with heat exhaustion have a rapid pulse. Rest in a cool place and get plenty of fluids. If you don't feel better soon, get medical care. Be careful—heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke.

- **Heat stroke** can be life threatening! You need to get medical help right away. Possible signs of heat stroke: fainting, body temperature over 104°F, change in behavior (confusion, grouchy, staggering), dry flushed skin, strong rapid pulse or slow weak pulse, no sweating, being in a coma.

## How Can I Lower My Risk:

- Drink plenty of liquids—water, fruit, or vegetable juices. Aim for eight glasses every day. Heat tends to make you lose fluids, so it is very important to remember to keep drinking liquids when it's hot.
- If you live in a home or apartment without fans or air conditioning, try to keep your house as cool as possible.
- Don't work outside during the heat of the day.
- Stay in the shade
- Dress for the weather. Some people find natural fabrics such as cotton to be cooler than synthetic fibers. Light-colored clothes feel cooler. Don't try to exercise or do a lot of activities when it's hot.

## What Should I Remember?

To keep heat-related illnesses from becoming a dangerous heat stroke, remember to:

- Get out of the sun and into a cool place—air-conditioning is best.
- Drink fluids, but avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Shower, bathe, or at least sponge off with cool water.
- Lie down and rest in a cool place.
- Visit your doctor or an emergency room if you don't cool down quickly.

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