

With summer just around the corner and heat and humidity on the rise we should all plan ahead to prevent heat-related illness. Every year thousands of people get sick and some even die due to heat illness. Heat illness can impact even those in very good physical condition like professional athletes. Please take a minute to read the following information to protect yourself and those around you:

What Is Heat Illness?

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke can result in death and requires immediate medical attention.

Who Is Affected?

Anyone exposed to hot and humid conditions is at risk of heat illness, especially if you are doing physically taxing activities or are doing something that requires bulky protective clothing and equipment. Some people have a higher tolerance to hot conditions than others so it is important to be aware of your own personal limitations.

How Can Heat Illness Be Prevented?

Remember these three words:

- Water
- Rest
- Shade

Drinking water often, taking breaks, and limiting time in the heat can help prevent heat illness.

There are additional steps you can take that will also help prevent heat-related illness:

- Gradually increase activity and allow more frequent breaks during the first week or so of hot weather.
- Also make sure you and those who are with you know the symptoms of heat illness and look out for these signs in yourself and others during hot weather.
- Plan for heat-related emergencies, and make sure everyone knows what to do. Acting quickly in heat illness emergencies can save lives.

Using the Heat Index

We become overheated from two primary sources:

- Environmental conditions (whether hot weather outside or hot conditions inside)
- Internal heat generated by physical activity

To make sure you keep safe as the heat rises, review this table, which matches temperatures, risk levels, and protective measures for high temperatures:

Heat Index	Risk Level	Protective Measures
Less than 91°F	Lower caution	Basic heat safety and planning
91°F to 103°F	Moderate	Implement precautions and heighten awareness
103°F to 115°F	High	Additional precautions to protect yourself
Greater than 115°F	Very high to extreme	Triggers even more aggressive protective measures

For lower caution risk levels:

- Drink plenty of water (make sure it is available).
- Wear a hat and sunscreen.
- Take rest breaks in an air conditioned or cool, shaded area.
- Acclimate yourself to the environment if it is not familiar.

For moderate risk level, take all of the precautions above, plus:

- Watch for signs of heat stress
- Drink at least 4 cups of water every hour
- Report heat-related symptoms immediately and seek appropriate first aid
- Call 911 if someone loses consciousness or appears confused or uncoordinated.

For the high risk level, *you* should take these additional precautions:

- Increase rest periods.
- Reduce the activity level and pace strenuous tasks.
- Make sure cool, fresh water is available, and drink plenty of water every 15 to 20 minutes.

For very high and extreme risk levels:

- Reschedule all non-essential outdoor activity to days when the heat index is lower.
- Move essential outdoor activity to the coolest part of the day.
- Prioritize and plan essential activity carefully. Strenuous activity should not be conducted when the heat index is at or above 115°F.
- Stop activity if essential control methods are inadequate or unavailable when the risk of heat illness is very high.

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