

# Get the Facts: Extreme Heat

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Summer months bring barbecues, baseball games and trips to the lakefront. While the higher temperatures are a welcome break from the harsh winters in Chicago, the Chicago Department of Public Health reminds residents to take basic precautions while enjoying themselves outdoors. Extreme heat and humidity are more than an inconvenience ---they are dangerous and in some cases can be deadly. This fact sheet explains some basic facts about heat related illnesses.

## Who is at risk for heat related illness?

Anyone which is why we should all take basic precautions to protect ourselves. Those at greatest risk for heat related illness include infants and children up to four years of age, people 65 years of age and older, people who are overweight and people who are ill or on certain medications.

## What is Heat Stroke?

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. It occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. The telltale signs of heat stroke are:

- An extremely high body temperature, like 103 degrees or above
- Dizziness and nausea
- A throbbing headache and a pulse that is rapid and strong
- Skin that is red, hot and dry.

If you see someone suffering from heat stroke, take immediate action ---Call 911 right away then try to move the person into a cool, shady place.

## What is Heat Exhaustion?

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids.

Its symptoms can include:

- Heavy sweating
- Muscle cramps
- Weakness, fatigue and dizziness
- Headache, nausea and vomiting
- Fainting
- Breathing that is fast and shallow
- Skin that feels cool and moist
- A pulse that is fast

If you see someone suffering from heat exhaustion, help the victim to cool off and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour.

### How can I prevent heat related illness?

It is important to stay hydrated, as your body loses fluids through sweat. Be sure to drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol, caffeine or sugary drinks, which also cause you to lose more body fluid. In addition, the following steps can be taken to help prevent heat related illness:

1. Keep your body cool. Take cool showers or baths if necessary.
2. Stay in air conditioned buildings as much as possible. If you don't have access to air conditioning, call 311 to find the nearest cooling center. DO NOT rely on a fan as your primary cooling source.
3. Be sure to monitor weather forecasts so you can plan your activities safely when it's hot outside. Avoid going out in the heat during the hottest part of the day.
4. If you do go out wear light, loose-fitting clothing---and wear a hat to protect your head. Use sunscreen and reapply as directed on the package. If you're exercising or working outside, pace yourself and drink two to four cups of water per hour. If possible, take breaks to cool off in an air conditioned room and always have a partner with you.
5. NEVER leave infants or children in a parked car. Nor should pets be left in parked cars—they can suffer heat-related illness too.
6. Check on your relatives, friends and neighbors and share these tips with them. The elderly, those who live alone, those who are ill and young children are most vulnerable to extreme heat and humidity.

**For more information about extreme heat, visit:**

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.asp>