

Extreme Heat



Did You Know?

Heat related deaths are very preventable, yet, every year many people die from heat related causes. According to the CDC, from 1979-2003 about 8,015 deaths in the United States occurred from extreme heat exposure.

People living in urban areas could surprisingly be at greater risk for the effects of prolonged heat exposure. Environmental conditions often found in cities such as stale atmosphere and bad air quality can cause heat-related illness. Also, asphalt and concrete hold heat longer and can release heat at night and produce increased nighttime temperatures. According to FEMA this phenomenon is known as the “urban heat island effect”.

Extreme heat can be very dangerous for anyone but is particularly dangerous for the elderly, infants, children, and individuals with chronic health conditions that make them more susceptible to heat stress.

To avoid becoming ill from heat related illness, stay indoors in places with air conditioning such as malls or movie theaters. You can contact your local health department for information about community cooling centers in your area. During periods of extreme heat you should also drink more fluids, especially cool water, and avoid alcohol.

What is a heat-related illness?

Heat related illness happens when the body is not able to properly cool itself. Normally, the body cools itself by sweating. However, sometimes sweating isn't enough. In cases like this, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.

Extreme Heat Terminology:

Heat waves are prolonged periods of excessive heat, often combined with excessive humidity.

Heat index is a number of degrees in Fahrenheit (F) that tells what the relative humidity is added to the air temperature. Full sunlight exposure can increase the heat index significantly.

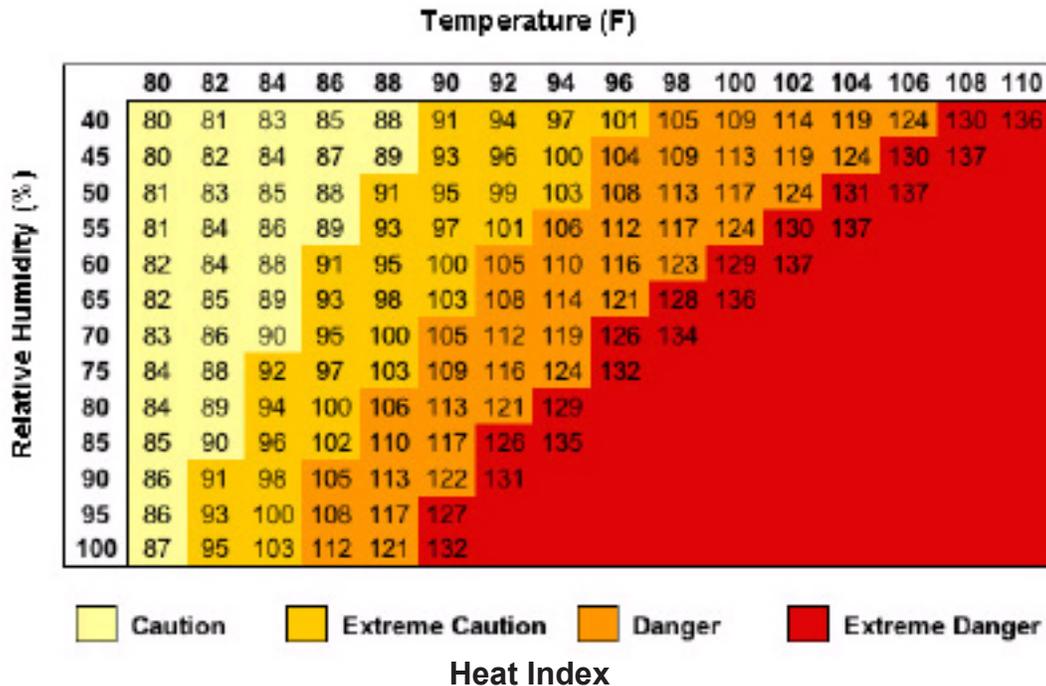
Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms that occur because of heavy exertion. Heat cramps are the least severe symptom of heat illness, but they are often the first sign that the body is not coping well with the heat.

Heat exhaustion occurs when a person exercises or works in a hot, humid place and a lot of fluids are lost through sweating. During heat exhaustion blood flow to skin increases which decreases the amount of blood flow to vital organs.

Heat stroke is a serious life threatening condition. Heat stroke occurs when a body's temperature control system stops working. When this happens the body temperature can rise so high that brain damage can occur and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.



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What are the symptoms of heat stroke?

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

What are some signs of heat exhaustion?

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

How do I stay healthy during waves of extreme heat?

- Drink cool, non-alcoholic beverages
- Rest
- Cool down with a cold shower or bath
- Stay in an air conditioned space
- Dress in light weight weather appropriate clothing

How much should I drink during hot weather?

Drink until you are no longer thirsty. You should be drinking more fluids, regardless of your activity level. If you participate in heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink two to four glasses (16-18oz) of fluids each hour. Alcoholic beverages should be avoided as they can increase risk of dehydration.

Can my pet get sick from extreme heat too?

Yes! Your pet can get sick from extreme heat too. You should not leave pets or children alone in cars during times of extreme heat. The temperature of the car increases very quickly in situations of extreme heat and can quickly become unbearable. Animals also need to drink more water and stay in cool shaded places during times of extreme heat. In cases of severely extreme heat animals should be brought into air conditioned spaces just as humans should.

Where can I find more information on extreme heat situations?

To find out if a heat emergency has been declared or if your community has opened cooling centers, visit your town or city's website. You can also visit Mass.gov or call Mass211 to find resources.

For more information please visit our website:
http://region4b.org/Extreme_Heat.aspx