

# Stay safe in the heat

The human body is normally able to regulate its temperature through sweating, until it is exposed to more heat than it can handle. Heat-related illnesses can escalate rapidly, and even lead to death. In 2021, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported 201 people died and 67 were injured in the U.S. from weather-related excessive heat, according to *Injury Facts*.

We all need to take extra precautions in the heat, but the people most at risk include:

- People who work in the heat
- Infants and young children, especially if left in hot cars
- People 65 and older
- People who are ill, have chronic health conditions or are on certain medications
- People who are overweight

If you are going through a heat wave in your community, please check in on neighbors who are elderly, house-bound or otherwise may be reluctant to ask for help. You can offer to host them in the air-conditioned comfort of your living room on hot days, drive them to a local cooling center, or call relatives or city services to arrange for them to stay cool.

The best way to avoid a heat-related illness is to limit exposure outdoors during hot days. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Air conditioning is the best way to cool off
- Drink fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty, and avoid alcohol
- Wear loose, lightweight clothing and a hat
- Replace salt lost from sweating by drinking a sports drink
- Avoid spending time outdoors during the hottest part of the day, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Wear sunscreen; sunburn affects the body's ability to cool itself
- Pace yourself when you run or otherwise exert your body
- Eat light meals



If your job requires you to work outside in hot weather, you and your supervisors can take precautions to minimize the risk of heat-related illnesses. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends:

- Working shorter shifts until workers have adjusted to the heat
- Staying hydrated and drinking before you get thirsty
- Watch out for co-workers exhibiting signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke
- Take time to rest and cool down

It's important to listen to your body. If you're involved in physical activity in the heat, changes in how you feel may be an indicator of heat stress. Stop and take a break if you experience the following:

- Thirst
- Fatigue
- Sore or painful muscles or cramps
- Pulse higher than usual for the activity
- Dizziness and/or headache
- Low abdominal pain
- Nausea

Knowing the symptoms and proper response to heat-related illnesses can save a life. Get the free [NSC First Aid Reference Guide app](#) for your Apple or Android device to know the signs and symptoms as well as first aid steps for heat exhaustion, heat stroke and heat cramps.