

Taking it one step at a time.

Heat Wave: A Major Summer Killer



Heat kills by taxing the human body beyond its capabilities. In a normal year, about 175 Americans succumb to the demands of summer heat. Among the family of natural hazards, including floods, earthquakes, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes, only the cold of winter takes a greater toll than heat.

The National Weather Service has stepped up its efforts to alert the general public to the hazards of heat waves. Based on the latest research findings, the NWS has devised the "Heat Index," or HI. The HI, given in degrees Fahrenheit, is an accurate measure of how hot it really feels when relative humidity is added to the actual air temperature. To find the HI on the Heat Index Chart below, find the air temperature on the left side of the table and the relative humidity across the top of the table. The HI is at the intersection of the temperature row and relative humidity column.

On the Heat Index chart, the area above the line corresponds to a level of HI that may cause increasingly severe heat disorders with continued exposure and/or physical activity.

NOTE: Heat Index values were devised for shady, light wind conditions. FULL SUNSHINE CAN INCREASE HI VALUES BY UP TO 15 °F. Also, strong winds, particularly with very hot, dry air, can be extremely hazardous.

RELATIVE HUMIDITY (%)

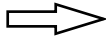
		RELATIVE HUMIDITY (%)																				
		0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
AIR TEMPERATURE (°F)	140	125																				
	135	120	128																			
	130	117	122	131																		
	125	111	116	123	131	141																
	120	107	111	116	123	130	139	148														
	115	103	107	111	115	120	127	135	143	151												
	110	99	102	105	108	112	117	123	130	137	143	150										
	105	95	97	100	102	105	109	113	118	123	129	135	142	149								
	100	91	93	95	97	99	101	104	107	110	115	120	126	132	138	144						
	95	87	88	90	91	93	94	96	98	101	104	107	110	114	119	124	130	136				
	90	83	84	85	86	87	88	90	91	93	95	96	98	100	102	106	109	113	117	122		
	85	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	93	95	97	99	102	105	108
	80	73	74	75	76	77	77	78	79	79	80	81	81	82	83	85	86	86	87	88	89	91
75	69	69	70	71	72	72	73	73	74	74	75	75	76	76	77	77	78	78	79	79	80	
70	64	64	65	65	66	66	67	67	68	68	69	69	70	70	70	70	71	71	71	71	72	



*Heat Disorder Symptoms and Treatment

- Sunburn:** Redness and pain. In severe cases, there may be swelling of the skin, blisters, fever, and/or headaches. Use ointments for mild cases. If blisters appear, do not break them. If blisters break, apply a dry, sterile dressing. Refer serious cases to a physician.
- **Heat Cramps:** Painful muscle spasms may occur, usually in the legs and/or abdomen. Use firm pressure on cramping muscles, or use gentle massage to relieve the spasms. Give sips of water to replace the water lost through sweating. If nausea occurs, discontinue water.
- **Heat Exhaustion:** Heavy sweating, weakness, skin is cold, pale, and clammy. Pulse is weak and shallow. Normal temperature is possible. Fainting and vomiting may occur. Get the victim out of the sun. Lay him or her down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths.
- **Heat Stroke (or Sunstroke):** High body temperature (106 °F or higher). Skin is hot and dry. Pulse is rapid and strong. Possible unconsciousness. **See warning box at right.**

WARNING: HEAT STROKE IS A SEVERE MEDICAL EMERGENCY. SUMMON EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE OR GET THE VICTIM TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY. DELAY CAN BE FATAL. DO NOT GIVE FLUIDS. Move victim to a cooler environment. Reduce body temperature with cold bath or sponging. Use fans or air conditioning. If victim's temperature rises again, repeat the cooling process.



Heat Wave Safety Tips

- **Slow down.** Strenuous activities should be reduced, eliminated, or rescheduled to the coolest time of the day. Individuals at risk due to medical problems should stay in the coolest available place, not necessarily indoors.
- **Dress for summer.** Loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight and helps your body maintain normal temperatures.
- **Put less fuel on your inner fires.** Foods that increase metabolic heat production (like proteins) also increase water loss.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Your body needs water to keep cool; so drink plenty, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid drinks with sugar, caffeine, or alcohol. Persons who (1) have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease, (2) are on fluid restrictive diets, or (3) have a fluid retention problem should consult a physician before increasing their fluid consumption.
- **Do not drink alcoholic beverages.**
- **Do not take salt tablets unless specified by a physician.** Persons on salt-restrictive diets should consult their physician before increasing their salt intake.
- **Spend more time in air-conditioned places.** Air conditioning in homes and other buildings markedly reduces your danger from the heat. If you cannot afford an air conditioner, spending some time each day (during hot weather) in an air-conditioned environment affords some protection.
- **Don't get too much sun.** Sunburn makes the job of heat dissipation that much more difficult.

*For More Information: Contact the Red Cross (280-1440) and ask to enroll in a first aid course.