



## Excessive Heat and Heat-Related Illness

Summer and fall months are hot and dry in California. This can lead to heat related illnesses, like heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, sunburn, and heat rash. All of these are preventable. There are steps you can take to protect those you serve during heat waves.

### What is Extreme Heat?

Extreme heat or heat waves happen when temperatures reach extremely high levels or when heat and humidity cause the air to feel heavy.

### What Does Extreme Heat Do to the Body?

When someone is exposed to extreme heat the body's temperature control system can become overloaded, and an individual's temperature can rise rapidly. Very high body temperatures can affect the brain and other vital organs.

Common heat-related illnesses are:

- **Heat Stroke** – The body loses the ability to sweat and cannot control its temperature leading to the core body temperature rising rapidly and can lead to loss of consciousness and death. This is a medical emergency. Call 911
- **Heat Exhaustion** – The body loses too much water and salt through heavy sweating, and, if not treated, can become a heat stroke.
- **Heat Cramps** – The body loses water and salt from heavy sweating or physical activity and causes muscle pains and spasms, usually in the stomach and legs.
- **Sunburn** – Skin becomes red, painful, and warm after being in the sun.
- **Heat Rash** – Skin becomes irritated and has clusters of pimples or small blisters caused by excessive sweating.

### Who is At High-Risk of Heat-Related Illnesses?

- Infants and young children;
- People 65 years of age or older;
- People who are overweight;
- People who overexert during work or exercise; and
- People who are physically ill, especially those with heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications, such as for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation.

Some medications that can increase the risk of heat-related illnesses:

- Psychotropics like haloperidol or chlorpromazine;
- Medications for Parkinson's disease;
- Tranquilizers such as phenothiazines, butyrophenones, and thiozanthenes; and
- Diuretic medications or water pills.



### Understand Signs of Heat Related Illness and How to Respond



Download this CDC guide on identifying and responding to heat-related illnesses: [Heat Related Illnesses \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/heat-related-illnesses/)





**Did you know:** Sunburns can decrease the body's ability to cool off and can lead to dehydration.

### Stay Cool and Avoid Sunburn

Encourage individuals to:

- Wear appropriate lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing;
- Stay in an air-conditioned place as much as possible;
- Go to a heat-relief shelter (talk to local health department to find one near you) during very hot weather if there is no air conditioning in the home;
- Pace exercise and outdoor work; avoid outdoors work and exercise between 10 am and 4 pm when it is hot.
- Wear sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses when outdoors;
- Never stay in, or leave people or pets in, a parked car, even if a window is cracked, because the car can get dangerously hot very quickly; and
- Avoid eating hot and heavy meals, since these increase body heat.

### Stay Hydrated

Encourage individuals to:

- Drink more fluids than they typically do;
- Not wait until they are thirsty to drink water; and
- Stay away from very sugary, caffeinated, or alcoholic drinks.

Consult with their medical care team:

- If the individual's doctor limits the amount they drink or has the individual on water pills; and
- Ask about the best way to replace salt and minerals after heavy sweating, if drinking a sports drink is not a good option.

### Protect Others

- Individuals can check in on friends and family to make sure they are staying cool and feeling healthy through the extreme heat.
- Help individuals set up a buddy system.

### Additional Resources

Public Safety Power Shutoff Alerts:

[Public Safety Power Shutoff – What You Can Do to Prepare \(prepareforpowerdown.com\)](https://www.prepareforpowerdown.com)

Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness:

[Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov)

Tips for Treating Heat-Related Illness:

[Tips for Treating Heat-Related Illness \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov)

Seniors and Heat-Related Illness:

[Seniors and Heat-Related Illness \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov)

Children and Heat-Related Illness:

[Children and Heat-Related Illness \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov)

Protecting Your Pet During Hot Weather:

[Protecting Your Pet During Hot Weather \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov)

Extreme Heat Information:

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) About Extreme Heat | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

More Tips to Prevent Heat-Related Illness:

[Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

