



Medications and Heat

For Patients

It is important to know which medications can increase your risk of health problems during hot weather. Your provider or pharmacist can help you review your medication list and provide instructions to help you protect your health.

Medications that affect how your body cools down

Some medications can make it harder for your body to cool down in hot weather. They can change how hot you feel, block natural cooling responses, or affect your ability to think clearly. Some can also change your blood pressure or cause problems if you get dehydrated. It is important to follow your heat action plan to stay safe. Your healthcare provider might also give you special instructions related to use of these medications when it is hot outside.

You are taking the following medications that can increase your risk of overheating:

Medication name(s): _____

Special instructions: _____

Medications that increase dehydration risk

Some medications can make you lose more water when you urinate, sweat more, or make you less thirsty. Hot weather can increase your risk of dehydration. This can harm your kidneys and/or cause low blood pressure, making you faint or fall and putting you at risk of injury.

You are taking the following medications that can increase your risk of dehydration:

Medication Name(s): _____

Special Instructions: _____

How to stay safe

- Pay close attention to how much water you drink throughout the day. You might need to drink more water than usual, even if you are not feeling thirsty.
- **If you have heart or kidney problems or if you usually restrict how much fluid you drink**, plan with your doctor to stay hydrated but not drink too much.

- Check your weight every day. If you are losing weight, drink more water and electrolytes. If you are gaining weight, you may be drinking too much water and/or salt or electrolytes.
- Use a urine color chart to check for dehydration.
- Pay attention to your body. If you feel dizzy or faint, or if you have a rapid heartbeat, you might be dehydrated.

Medication storage

Heat can damage medications and medical devices, making them less effective. Most should be stored at room temperature (59-86°F). Some medications, like insulin, biologic medications, or liquid antibiotics for children, need to be refrigerated. However, during an emergency, insulin can be left unrefrigerated at a temperature of 59-86°F for up to 28 days and continue to work. Do not use insulin if it has become frozen. Check with your pharmacist or read the medication instructions to learn how your medications need to be stored.

Tips to protect medications from heat

- Store in a cool, dry, dark place.
- Keep out of direct sunlight.
- Do not leave in a hot car.
- Protect from heat when traveling.
- Bring mail-order medications inside quickly.
 - Be extra careful with life-saving medications like EpiPens, nitroglycerin, glucagon, or naloxone. If these become damaged by heat, they may not be effective in an emergency.
- If you need to transport medications that are usually stored in the refrigerator:
 - Keep them as cool as possible, ideally in an insulated cooler or pouch.
 - If you use a cooler, **do not store your medications directly on ice**. Medications may be damaged if they freeze.

Prepare for a power outage

If you have medications that need to be stored in a refrigerator, be prepared with a backup plan in case the power goes out for a long time. If your refrigerator loses power, you might need to find other ways to keep your medications as cool as possible.

- **Keep a backup cooler:** Keep an insulated cooler at home or take it with you if you need to leave. This backup can help protect medications even if they cannot be stored at the recommended temperatures.
- **Monitor temperatures:** Consider getting an inexpensive thermometer (\$10 or less) for the inside of the refrigerator to check if it is still keeping medications cool during a power outage.

If your medications get hot or if you think they might have been damaged by heat or improper storage: Talk to your pharmacist. They can tell you if they need to be replaced and help you get them replaced if needed.

Based on materials developed by Hayley Blackburn, PharmD, Associate Professor, University of Montana Skaggs School of Pharmacy.

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