



# Tips for People With Specific Health Conditions or Risk Factors

## For Patients

This sheet gives overall tips and specific recommendations to people at-risk from the heat.

### Tips for all people

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- Avoid activities during the hottest part of the day when possible.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids such as water and electrolyte drinks.
- Avoid beverages with sugar, corn syrup, caffeine, and alcohol.
- Wear light colored, lightweight, loose-fitting clothing if you must go outside.
- Try to seek cooler environments and shade.
- Know where you can go to stay cool. This might be a neighbor or friend's home, a local business, or a cooling center near you. Sleep in a cool area if you can.
- Check-in on friends, family, and neighbors that may need help in the heat.
- Know who to ask for help if you are feeling too hot.
- Make a heat action plan with your healthcare provider today.

### Tips for different health conditions or risks factors for heat illness

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#### Babies or small children

- Babies and small children are at risk from heat due to their small bodies and difficulty controlling temperature.
- Keep babies and children in a **cool and shaded area** during hot weather, but do not reduce skin-to-skin contact even if it is hot.
- **Covering strollers with a moist muslin cloth and a clip-on fan** helps keep the stroller cool. Do not cover with a dry cloth as that can increase stroller temperatures.
- Ensure babies are **well-hydrated** with breastmilk or formula and that breast-feeding mothers are well hydrated as well.
- Make sure children stay **well-hydrated** by providing them with lots of fluids.
- Make sure they are urinating regularly.
- **If a baby or child appears pale, floppy, or exhibits unusual behavior, seek immediate medical attention.**

#### Chronic medications

- Certain medications can make it **harder for your body to cool down** or make you more likely to become dehydrated.

- **Go over your medication list** with your pharmacist or healthcare provider to know if you are on any medications that put you at higher risk.
- Unless your healthcare provider or pharmacist tells you to do something differently, keep taking your medications as prescribed.

## Dementia

- Dementia patients including those with Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease have a **higher risk of heat stroke, hospitalization, and death** in hot weather.
- Dementia can **impair temperature regulation and memory**, making people forget to stay hydrated or take actions to stay cool such as taking off hot clothes or going somewhere cool.
- Regularly check in on individuals with dementia for their well-being.
- Offer those with dementia more fluids to drink and move them to a cooler place if they are in a hot environment.
- If you have dementia, make a plan to stay cool, drink water, and have someone check on you.

## Diabetes

- High temperatures can lead to dehydration and cause problems with blood sugar control for people with diabetes. Losing weight, dark urine, and a fast heart rate can be signs of dehydration.
- Keep your **glucometer and insulin cool**, but do not put insulin directly on ice. Insulin should be kept in a refrigerator at 36 to 46 degrees Fahrenheit. Please see **Medications and Heat (For Patients)** for more information.
- **Monitor blood sugar** before, during, and after activity in hot weather; adjust insulin if needed.

## Heart disease

- Hot weather can put **stress on the heart and lungs** and cause problems for those with cardiovascular diseases, such as heart failure or history of heart attack.
- Watch out for both **dehydration** and **overheating**. Nausea, headaches, and dizziness are symptoms you should watch out for.
- **Weigh yourself daily** when it is hot out and know your target weight; when it is hot you could be dehydrated if you lose too much weight.
- Some **medications**, for example diuretics (water pills), can make you dehydrated; talk to your doctor about how to manage your heart medicines and fluid intake.

## Kidney disease

- Kidneys work extra hard in hot conditions and can be damaged if you do not drink enough water. Ensure proper hydration, indicated by light-colored urine.
- Individuals with chronic kidney disease or on dialysis face elevated risks in hot weather.
- **Medications** for kidney disease can make it harder to handle heat; talk to your doctor for guidance.
- Discuss your ideal fluid intake with a healthcare professional and monitor your weight; if you are losing too much weight you may be dehydrated.

## Limited mobility

- People with limited mobility are also at risk of heat illness and not being able to get to cool spaces.
- If you feel too hot, **ask for help** from others if needed, like neighbors, friends, or family.
- If your neighbor, friend, or family member has limited mobility, **check on them** during hot weather, and, if possible, find them a safe place to stay until the weather cools down.
- Getting to cooling centers can be challenging if you are living with limited mobility; see if your local transportation authority or local charities offer rides for qualified individuals who need to get somewhere cool during a heat wave.

## Lung diseases (such as asthma or COPD)

- Hot weather can be dangerous for people with lung conditions like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma. Worsening air quality can trigger exacerbations of your lung disease.
- **Monitor air quality** using the Air Quality Index (AQI) to decide whether it is safe to be outdoors.
- If the AQI is below 50, outdoor activities are generally safe. Consult your medical provider if it is above 50.
- **Seek cool environments and stay indoors if you can when air quality is poor** due to smoke or pollution, particularly on hot days when smog is visible.
- Search for **cooling centers** to go to if it is too hot to stay safe inside your home.

## Mental health conditions

- Hot weather can **exacerbate symptoms** of mental health conditions and disrupt sleep, leading to worsened symptoms.
- Certain mental health conditions and medications (e.g., antidepressants, antipsychotics) can impair the body's ability to cool down in heat. Take extra care in the heat if you take these.
- Avoid extremely hot places or workspaces, take breaks, and drink plenty of fluids.
- If you or someone around you appears lightheaded, confused, or behaves unusually, **move to a cooler environment**, notify those around you and seek medical attention.

## Multiple sclerosis (MS)

- Hot weather and dehydration can **increase symptoms of MS such as fatigue and weakness**.
- **Stay hydrated**, even if you have bladder control difficulties.
- If you are already feeling hot, **avoid strenuous activities**, as they can elevate body temperature and worsen MS symptoms.

## Older adults

- Older adults can have difficulty staying cool during hot weather. Many of those who are injured or die because of heat are over the age of 65 years.
- If you are over age 65, be extra careful to **stay in a cool environment** and **avoid strenuous outdoor activities** during hot conditions.
- If you feel too hot, **ask for help** from others if needed, like neighbors, friends, or family.

- If your house is too hot, try to **get to a safe, cool location**.
- If your neighbor, friend, or family member is an older adult, **check on them** during hot weather, and, if possible, find them a safe place to stay until the weather cools down.
- **If you - or an older adult around you - start behaving unusually during hot weather, appear pale or weak, or have difficulty walking, seek medical attention right away.**

## Outdoor workers

- Heat can be hard to avoid if you work outdoors and can result in heat illness, kidney disease, and increases in injury.
- Avoid extremely hot places or workspaces and **reduce work effort**, if possible, when it is too hot.
- Pay extra attention as you are more **at risk of injury** in hot weather.
- Stay hydrated by **drinking plenty of fluids** and avoiding alcohol.
- If you can, try to **stay in the shade** or find cool spaces.
- When possible, **work during cooler times of the day**.
- Try to **limit your heat exposure** before and after work, including where you sleep at night, so your body can recover.
- Know the **early signs of heat illness** including nausea, muscle cramps, hot or extra sweaty skin, or dizziness, and notify your supervisor or ask for help.
- **Use a buddy system** to stay aware of the heat and check on one another. If you notice you or someone you work with is dizzy, confused, or behaves unusually, move to a cooler environment, let someone know, and seek medical attention.

## Pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Pregnancy can make it **more difficult** to cope with hot weather as the body is already working hard for you and the baby.
- Heat is associated with **risk of birth defects** especially when it is hot earlier in pregnancy, as well as higher chances of **pregnancy loss** or **premature birth**. Heat can also be associated with braxton-hicks or “practice” contractions.
- If you are pregnant, take precautions to **stay cool and avoid excessive heat** and make sure to stay hydrated by drinking lots of water and taking breaks. **If you are breastfeeding**, make sure to drink lots of fluids and stay hydrated as you are at increased risk of dehydration.

## Substance use

- People who use drugs or alcohol may be at higher risk of heat illness and less able to get to cool spaces.
- In particular, **alcohol and alcohol hangovers can make you more at risk of dehydration and stimulants such as methamphetamine can increase your risk of dangerous overheating.**
- If you feel too hot, **ask for help** from neighbors, friends, or family,
- **Use a buddy system** to look out for others who may be using drugs or alcohol in hot temperatures.
- Try to find a safe place to cool down, especially if you or those around you may not be as aware of heat when using drugs or alcohol.

