

Why, That Burns Me Up!

If the summer sun is leaving its mark on you, you're asking for trouble. The sun should provide warmth and the emotional lift that comes from a healthy relationship with nature. But you can get too much of a good thing.

In a typical year, more than 350

Americans die from the summer heat. So, while it's important to spend time outdoors, protect yourself from the dangers of sun and heat by following some basic precautions.

Combating Heat Stress

The first warning signs of heat stress are sluggishness and a foggy feeling. Other symptoms include headaches, dizziness, weakness, rapid heartbeat, muscle cramps, nausea, and lightheadedness. Learn the difference between heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, and how to treat them.

- Slow down. Reduce strenuous activity. Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid exposure to the sun, particularly between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Dress for summer.
 - Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight.
 - Loose fitting cotton clothing allows the skin to breathe and absorb sweat.
 - Wide-brimmed hats protect you from direct sunlight.
- Limit activities in the home that generate heat, such as cooking or ironing, during daylight hours.
 - If you are taking medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist if it will make you more susceptible to a heat-related illness.
 - Excessive heat is particularly dangerous to young kids, the elderly, and people with disabilities or excessive weight, because these individuals do not have the ability to physically handle or easily seek refuge from the heat. Watch them closely. (Here's a noteworthy fact: Men are more susceptible because they sweat more than women and become dehydrated more quickly.)
 - Never leave a person or pet locked in a car, even if the windows are left slightly open. Even on mild, sunny days, temperatures in an enclosed car can rise rapidly.
 - It usually takes 7-14 days for the body to adjust to hot environments. Start slowly and build up the hours you spend in the heat.
 - Bathe or shower several times a day in cool water.
 - For ventilation, open windows on the shaded side.
 - Take periodic rest breaks in a shaded or cool area to allow your body to cool off.

Watch What You Eat And Drink

• To keep cool, drink plenty of room temperature or cool (not cold) water, juices, or sports drinks, even if you don't feel thirsty. And drink them before, during, and after vigorous activity. Electrolytes (sodium and potassium) are particularly needed after heavy exertion.

Caution: If you have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease; are on fluid restrictive diets; or have a problem with fluid retention, you should consult a physician before increasing consumption of liquids.

- Eat light. The more calories you take in, the more body heat is produced. Avoid hot, heavy meals. Eat smaller, more frequent meals.
- Choose foods high in water content, such as fruits, salads and soups. Stay away from a diet heavy in proteins. They increase metabolic heat production and also increase water loss.



- Consult your doctor regarding the use of salt.

Workout Wisdom

- If you plan to exercise in the heat, start with brief workouts and increase them gradually over two weeks or more.
- Exercise in the early morning or evenings.
- Drink eight glasses of water throughout the day whether you are thirsty or not. If you exercise intensely, drink even more water until your urine is regularly clear.
- Drink a glass of water 15-30 minutes before going out. On a hot day, drink 4-8 ounces every 10-15 minutes during your activity. A gulp is an ounce.
- Drinks with caffeine or alcohol can increase water loss. Avoid them.
- Put cold water on the back of your neck, under the arms, and on the wrists to cool your body faster.
- If you feel dizzy or weak get out of the sun and drink cool fluids.
- After exercise, replace electrolytes with food or drinks.
- People at increased risk for heat ailments due to certain medications or chronic illness should exercise only in air-conditioned places.■