

Stay safe as summer temps soar

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(HealthDay)—As the first major heat wave of the season has much of the eastern United States sizzling, people need to take steps to prevent heat-related illnesses, an emergency doctor says.

Hot temperatures and high humidity are likely from the shores of New England through the Great Plains. Temperatures could reach into the 90s for days, according to *The Weather Channel*. In some areas, record high temperatures set in the 1800s could be broken, *USA Today* reported.

"It's vital to drink plenty of cool fluids, and stay out of the sun during the mid-part of the day [10 a.m. to 2 p.m.] when the sun is typically the strongest," said Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

"Try to reduce exertion when the [heat](#) index climbs—conserve your energy," he recommended.

"If you will be exercising in the heat for under one hour, make sure you drink [cool water](#) before you begin your exercise, as well as after you complete your workout. Under one hour of exercise, sports drinks and salt replenishment are generally unnecessary. That said, the heat index and humidity are important factors in your choice of ideal fluid," Glatter said.

But if you're planning to exercise in the heat and humidity for more than an hour, it's important to consume a sports drink, in addition to water, to replenish the salt loss from sweating, Glatter said. "A few salty pretzels are also a good alternative to a sports drink if you prefer," he added.

It's best to stay indoors with [air conditioning](#) if possible. If air conditioning isn't available, you can reduce your [temperature](#) by spraying cool mist on your skin and using a fan.

If you go outside, wear loose-fitting and light-colored clothing and a wide-brimmed hat. Put on sunscreen and reapply it every two hours while in the sun, Glatter said.

And never leave a child in a parked car in the summertime. "When it is 90 degrees outside, the temperature can climb to over 150 degrees in the car in as little as 15 to 20 minutes," Glatter warned.

"Even when it is 70 degrees outside, the temperature can climb to well over 100 degrees in under 30 minutes. The windows in the car trap heat, almost like a greenhouse effect," he said.

The ASPCA reminds pet owners that the same advice holds true for your furry companions: don't leave them in the car. Even with the windows open a bit, a car can get dangerously hot, and dogs don't cool themselves as well as humans do.

During any periods of high heat and humidity, keep a close eye on seniors and children because both are at increased risk for heat-related illnesses, Glatter said.

"Heat cramps and heat exhaustion are the most common heat-related illnesses. Nausea, dizziness and muscle cramping are most common with this condition. Skin may be cool and moist with profuse sweating," he said.

Depending on how serious symptoms are, IV fluids may be necessary to help reduce the effects of heat. "A cool air-conditioned environment is also essential to help persons more effectively cool their bodies," he said.

Heat stroke is even more serious than cramps or exhaustion, and is a medical emergency.

"Patients may develop temperatures up to 106-108 degrees, with confusion and disorientation, and loss of ability to produce sweat to cool the body. Cooling ice baths and misting fans can help reduce core temperatures," Glatter explained.

"Typical medications such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen are not helpful with such elevated temperatures, and in fact may be harmful," he said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [extreme heat](#).

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