

# HANDLING SUMMER HEAT



The summer of 2011 was hotter and drier than usual in Texas. A new NOAA study shows that the extreme heat was caused mainly by nine months of drought in Texas and the rest of the Southern Plains leading up to summer 2011. Image: public domain via NOAA.gov

## Don't let heat have you beat!

### Tips for staying healthy and cool in summer

**If you plan on being out and about in summer, chances are you'll be exposed to a lot of sun and higher temperatures.**

Each year, heat kills 1,500 people on average in the United States — more than tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, lightning, or any other weather event combined.

“Heat can be a silent killer because it doesn’t topple trees or rip roofs off houses like tornadoes and hurricanes,” says Eli Jacks, chief of fire and public weather services with NOAA’s National Weather Service. “Nevertheless, it’s a dangerous weather condition for which people should prepare.”

**How much heat can a person safely endure? It depends.**



Sun (Source: <http://sco.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sun.jpg#filelinks>) Certain groups of people should be especially careful during hot weather conditions. For example, city-dwellers and those living in the upper floors of tall buildings or in heat-prone regions are most at-risk for heat-related illness. People who have difficulty getting around or who have health conditions are particularly susceptible. The elderly and the very young also merit special attention during periods of high heat and humidity.

This year, National Weather Service teamed up with Occupational Safety and Health Administration to increase awareness for outdoor workers and their employers during excessive heat events. As part of this partnership, National Weather Service will incorporate specific outdoor worker safety precautions when heat advisories and warnings are issued this summer.

**By taking some precautions, you can stay healthy while enjoying the great outdoors this summer:**

**1. Be informed and stay alert**

Pay close attention to heat advisories or warnings that have been issued for your community.

NOAA's National Weather Service continually updates heat-related advisories and warnings online at [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov). (Click on "Excessive Heat Warning" and "Heat Advisory" under [the U.S. map](#) — if there are no current warnings or advisories in the United States, nothing will appear).

- NOAA issues **excessive heat warnings** when weather conditions pose an imminent threat to life and **heat advisories** when weather conditions are expected to cause significant discomfort or inconvenience or — if caution is not taken — become life threatening.
- If you do not have Internet access, you can get heat advisory and warning information by watching your local television or radio newscast or by purchasing a NOAA [weather radio](#) and tuning into [NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards](#).
- Use the temperature and humidity to figure out the [heat index](#) for your area, a measure that tells us *how hot it feels*.

## 2. Plan for periods of extreme heat

- Visit your physician for a check-up to find out if you have a health condition that may be exacerbated by hot weather.
- Service your air conditioner before hot weather arrives, and obtain window fans to help cool your home.
- Know where to go when weather heats up. Find cool indoor places to spend time on hot summer days, such as a local library, shopping mall, museum or aquarium.

## 3. Know what to do and what not to do during hot weather

- **DO** - Slow down, and reduce strenuous activity. Mow the lawn or garden in the early morning or late evening instead of midday.
- **DO** - Dress in lightweight, nonrestrictive, light-colored clothing.
- **DO** - Drink plenty of water or other nonalcoholic fluids.
- **DO** - Eat light, easy-to-digest foods.
- **DO** - Seek out shade if you have to be outdoors for extended periods. Spend more time in air-conditioned places.
- **DO** - Check on elderly neighbors, friends and relatives to make sure they are okay.
- **DO** - When outside, take frequent dips in the ocean or pool, or mist yourself with a water bottle. When inside, take frequent cool baths or showers and use cold compresses to cool off.
- **DO** - Apply high-SPF sunscreen frequently when outdoors.
- **DO** - Seek immediate medical attention if you experience symptoms of [heat illness](#). (See chart below for symptoms, likely conditions and treatment.)

However, please remember:

- **DO NOT** leave children, the elderly, or pets in the car for any reason, for any length of time. A dark dashboard or seat can easily reach temperatures in the range of 180 to more than 200 degrees F!
- **DO NOT** stay in the sun for long periods.
- **DO NOT** take salt tablets unless directed by a physician.
- **AVOID** alcoholic beverages; they can dehydrate you and increase your risk of heat stroke and other potentially fatal heat-related illnesses.

#### 4. Know the warning signs of heat-related illness

Excessive heat exposure can raise your body temperature to unhealthy levels and may make you ill — it can also be deadly. Take the precautions listed above and be on the lookout for these warning signs that you may be in trouble:

Symptom	Likely Condition	Treatment
Painful muscle cramps and spasms, usually in muscles of legs and abdomen. Heavy sweating.	Heat cramps	Apply firm pressure on cramping muscles or gently massage to relieve spasm.  Give sips of water; if nausea occurs, discontinue water intake.  Consult with a clinician or physician if individual has fluid restrictions (e.g., dialysis patients).
Heavy sweating, weakness, cool skin, pale and clammy. Weak pulse. Normal temperature possible. Possible muscle cramps, dizziness, fainting, nausea and vomiting.	Heat exhaustion	Move individual out of sun, lay him or her down, and loosen clothing.  Apply cool, wet cloths.  Fan or move individual to air conditioned room.  Give sips of water; if nausea occurs, discontinue water intake.

		<p>If vomiting continues, seek immediate medical attention. Consult with a clinician or physician if individual has fluid restrictions (e.g., dialysis patients).</p>
<p>Altered mental state. Possible throbbing headache, confusion, nausea and dizziness. High body temperature (106°F or higher). Rapid and strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness. Skin may be hot and dry, or patient may be sweating. Sweating likely especially if patient was previously involved in vigorous activity.</p>	<p>Heat stroke</p>	<p>Heat stroke is a severe medical emergency.</p> <p>Summon emergency medical assistance or get the individual to a hospital immediately.</p> <p>Delay can be fatal.</p> <p>Move individual to a cooler, preferably air-conditioned, environment.</p> <p>Reduce body temperature with a water mister and fan or sponging.</p> <p>Use air conditioners. Use fans if heat index temperatures are below the high 90s. Use extreme caution.</p> <p>Remove clothing. If temperature rises again, repeat process. Do not give fluids.</p>

Source : <http://www.eoearth.org/view/news/51cbf19a7896bb431f6a61a0/?topic=51cbfc79f702fc2ba8129f1c>