

Government of the District of Columbia
Department of Health



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Media contact: (DOH) Najma Roberts
202-724-7481

DC Department of Health Offers Tips to Stay Healthy in the Heat

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – With current temperatures escalating and the heat index expected to reach 100 to 105 degrees, the DC Department of Health (DOH) reminds residents of how to stay healthy during this period of high temperatures. The hot and humid conditions can cause many medical problems such as heat exhaustion and stroke; residents are advised to take caution when outdoors.

DOH Tips for Staying Healthy and Cool in the Heat:

- Drink plenty of water
- Stay out of the sun
- Avoid drinks with caffeine, alcohol, and large amounts of sugar
- Wear clothing that is loose-fitting, light colored and breathable, such as cotton
- Dress infants and children in cool, loose clothing and shade their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella
- Limit sun exposure during mid-day hours and in places of potential severe exposure such as beaches
- Wear sunscreen
- Schedule outdoor activities carefully
- Do not leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car
- Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets, and leave the water in a shady area
- If you do not have access to a cool-temperature location, visit the District recreation center, library, or senior center closest to you

It is important for residents to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and stroke, as well as be aware of the various ways to avoid heat-related illnesses.

Heat stroke is a serious illness characterized by a body temperature greater than 105 degrees. Symptoms may include dry red skin, convulsions, throbbing headaches, disorientation, chills, delirium and coma. Onset of heatstroke can be rapid: a person can go from feeling apparently well to a seriously ill condition within minutes. Treatment of heatstroke involves the rapid lowering of body temperature, using a cool bath or wet towels. This is a true medical emergency, call 911.

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heatstroke that may develop due to a combination of several days with high temperatures and dehydration in an individual. Signs of heat exhaustion include extreme weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, or headache, heavy sweating, paleness and dizziness. Heat exhaustion is treated with plenty of liquids and rest in a cool, shaded area. Those on a low-sodium diet or with other health problems should contact a doctor.

Children and Pets

- Never leave infants, children or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open.
- To remind yourself that a child is in the car, keep a stuffed animal in the car. When the child is buckled in, place the stuffed animal in the front with the driver.
- When leaving your car, check to be sure everyone is out of the car. Be careful not to overlook any children who have fallen asleep in the car.

Groups at greatest risk for heat-related illness:

- Infants
- Children up to four years of age
- People 65 years of age and older
- People who are overweight
- People who are ill or on certain medications

Groups at greatest risk should be monitored carefully, and their environments should be regulated. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults at greatest risk be closely monitored and visited at least twice a day to view for possible signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children should also be closely monitored.

If you suspect that you or someone you know is experiencing a heat related illness, please call 911.

For more information on heat-related illness prevention, visit http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp

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