

EXTREME HEAT

Residents of southeast Louisiana are typically accustomed to dealing with warm, humid weather. But extreme and prolonged heat and humidity conditions can result in serious medical emergencies, even for those accustomed to local conditions. Take precautions when extreme heat conditions are expected or occurring. Learn about heat indices and the symptoms and treatments for heat related illnesses.

Extreme Heat Related Terms

Heat Wave - Prolonged period of excessive heat, often combined with excessive humidity.

Heat Index - A number in degrees Fahrenheit (F) that tells how hot it feels when relative humidity is added to the air temperature. Exposure to full sunshine can increase the heat index by 15 degrees.

Heat Cramps - Muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. Although heat cramps are the least severe, they are often the first signal that the body is having trouble with the heat.

Heat Exhaustion - Typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. If not treated, the victim's condition will worsen. Body temperature will keep rising and the victim may suffer heat stroke.

Heat Stroke - A life-threatening condition. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.

Sun Stroke - Another term for heat stroke.

Heat Advisories, Watches & Warnings

The National Weather Service (NWS) will issue advisories for extreme weather conditions. Remain weather aware and take precautions.

- **Excessive Heat Outlooks** are issued when the potential exists for an excessive heat event in the next 3-7 days. An Outlook provides information to those who need considerable lead-time to prepare for the event.
- **Heat Advisory—Take Action!** A Heat Advisory is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this *Advisory is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 100° or higher for at least 2 days, and night time air temperatures will not*

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drop below 75°; however, these criteria vary across the country, especially for areas that are not used to dangerous heat conditions. Take precautions to avoid heat illness. If you don't take precautions, you could become seriously ill or even die.

- **Excessive Heat Watch —Be Prepared!** Heat watches are issued when conditions are favorable for an **excessive heat event in the next 24 to 72 hours**. A Watch is used when the risk of a heat wave has increased but its occurrence and timing is still uncertain.
- **Excessive Heat Warning—Take Action!** An Excessive Heat Warning is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this Warning is when the **maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 105° or higher for at least 2 days and night time air temperatures will not drop below 75°**; however, these criteria vary across the country, especially for areas not used to extreme heat conditions. If you don't take precautions immediately when conditions are extreme, you become seriously ill or even die.

Extreme Heat Precautions

Before Extreme Heat:

To prepare for extreme heat, you should:

- Install window air conditioners snugly; insulate if necessary.
- Check air-conditioning ducts for proper insulation.
- Install temporary window reflectors (for use between windows and drapes), such as aluminum foil-covered cardboard, to reflect heat back outside.
- Weather-strip doors and sills to keep cool air in.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, awnings, or louvers. (Outdoor awnings or louvers can reduce the heat that enters a home by up to 80 percent.)
- Keep storm windows up all year.
- Have your air conditioning system serviced annually to ensure it is properly working.

During a Heat Emergency

- Stay indoors as much as possible and limit exposure to the sun.
- Stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine if air conditioning is not available.
- Consider spending the warmest part of the day in public buildings such as libraries, schools, movie theaters, shopping malls, and other community facilities. Circulating air can cool the body by increasing the perspiration rate of evaporation.

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- Eat well-balanced, light, and regular meals. Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.
- Drink plenty of water. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease; are on fluid-restricted diets; or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake.
- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages.
- Dress in loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothes that cover as much skin as possible.
- Protect face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who do not have air conditioning and who spend much of their time alone.
- Never leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles.
- Avoid strenuous work during the warmest part of the day. Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat, and take frequent breaks.

First Aid for Heat-Induced Illnesses

Extreme heat brings with it the possibility of heat-induced illnesses. The following table lists these illnesses, their symptoms, and the first aid treatment.

Condition	Symptoms	First Aid
Sunburn	Skin redness and pain, possible swelling, blisters, fever, headaches	Take a shower using soap to remove oils that may block pores, preventing the body from cooling naturally. Apply dry, sterile dressings to any blisters, and get medical attention.
Heat Cramps	Painful spasms, usually in leg and abdominal muscles; heavy sweating	Get the victim to a cooler location. Lightly stretch and gently massage affected muscles to relieve spasms. Give sips of up to a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. (Do not give liquids with caffeine or alcohol.) Discontinue liquids, if victim is nauseated.

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Condition	Symptoms	First Aid
Heat Exhaustion	Heavy sweating but skin may be cool, pale, or flushed. Weak pulse. Normal body temperature is possible, but temperature will likely rise. Fainting or dizziness, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion, and headaches are possible.	<p>Get victim to lie down in a cool place.</p> <p>Loosen or remove clothing.</p> <p>Apply cool, wet clothes.</p> <p>Fan or move victim to air-conditioned place.</p> <p>Give sips of water if victim is conscious.</p> <p>Be sure water is consumed slowly.</p> <p>Give half glass of cool water every 15 minutes.</p> <p>Discontinue water if victim is nauseated.</p> <p>Seek immediate medical attention if vomiting occurs.</p>
Heat Stroke (a severe medical emergency)	High body temperature (105+); hot, red, dry skin; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid shallow breathing. Victim will probably not sweat unless victim was sweating from recent strenuous activity. Possible unconsciousness.	<p>Call 9-1-1 or emergency medical services, or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal.</p> <p>Move victim to a cooler environment.</p> <p>Removing clothing</p> <p>Try a cool bath, sponging, or wet sheet to reduce body temperature.</p> <p>Watch for breathing problems.</p> <p>Use extreme caution.</p> <p>Use fans and air conditioners.</p>

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NOAA's National Weather Service

Heat Index

Temperature (°F)

Relative Humidity (%)	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110
40	80	81	83	85	88	91	94	97	101	105	109	114	119	124	130	136
45	80	82	84	87	89	93	96	100	104	109	114	119	124	130	137	
50	81	83	85	88	91	95	99	103	108	113	118	124	131	137		
55	81	84	86	89	93	97	101	106	112	117	124	130	137			
60	82	84	88	91	95	100	105	110	116	123	129	137				
65	82	85	89	93	98	103	108	114	121	128	136					
70	83	86	90	95	100	105	112	119	126	134						
75	84	88	92	97	103	109	116	124	132							
80	84	89	94	100	106	113	121	129								
85	85	90	96	102	110	117	126	135								
90	86	91	98	105	113	122	131									
95	86	93	100	108	117	127										
100	87	95	103	112	121	132										

Likelihood of Heat Disorders with Prolonged Exposure or Strenuous Activity

Caution
 Extreme Caution
 Danger
 Extreme Danger



NWS Heat Information Site: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/heat/index.shtml>