

52 Weeks to Health: Summer Heat Safety



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52 Weeks of Health – Week 14 – Summer Heat Safety

Department for Public Health Issues Safety Guidelines for Warm Temperatures

With the summer heat predicted to peak this week, issues like overexertion, heat stroke and dehydration have become important public health concerns.

“When temperatures rise to the 90s or even higher, there are some real risks of heat-related illness or ailments,” said Hiram Polk, M.D., Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) commissioner. Following some simple precautions can help keep you safe in the heat.”

According to DPH, following these precautions can make the difference between just being hot or being seriously ill:

- Stay cool indoors. The most efficient way to beat the heat is to stay in an air-conditioned area. If you do not have an air conditioner, consider visiting a mall or public library.
- Schedule outdoor activities carefully. If you must be out in the heat, try to plan your activities so that you are outdoors either before noon or in the evening. Rest periodically so your body’s thermostat will have a chance to recover.
- Drink plenty of fluid. Increase your normal fluid intake regardless of your activity level. You will need to drink more fluids than your thirst level indicates. This is especially true for people age 65 or older who often have a decreased ability to respond to external temperature changes. In addition, avoid drinking beverages containing alcohol because they will actually cause you to lose more fluid.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. In the hot sun, wear a wide-brimmed hat that will provide

shade and keep the head cool. Sunscreen should be SPF 15 or greater and applied 30 minutes before going out into the sun.

- Use a buddy system. When working in the heat, monitor the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness.

- Monitor those at high risk. Those at greatest risk of heat-related illness include infants and children up to 4 years of age; people 65 or older; people who are overweight; people who overexert during work or exercise; and people who are ill or on certain medications for blood pressure or diuretics.

“We also cannot stress enough the dangers of extremely hot cars and not to leave children or pets in vehicles during these heat waves,” said Polk. “Also, don’t forget to give your pet plenty of water, shade and a place to stay cool.”