

# HOT WEATHER HEALTH ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Extreme heat can lead to serious health issues. While anyone can be a victim of heat-related illness, highest risk groups include people under age 5 or over age 65, people with chronic illnesses, people taking certain medications, and those who are exercising or working outdoors.

## PREVENTION

- **Drink plenty of fluids** to prevent dehydration. Don't wait until you're thirsty. Drink 2-4 glasses (16-32 ounces) of water or fruit juice each hour. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and overly sweetened beverages
- **Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing**
- **Avoid direct sunlight** by staying in the shade. Wear sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses
- **NEVER leave children or pets in a car.** Even with the windows cracked. Even for just a minute
- **Check on elderly relatives or neighbors** daily. Make sure they have a cool place to be during extreme heat
- **Stay in air-conditioning** when possible
  - If your home is not air-conditioned, consider visiting a shopping mall or public library
  - Electric fans will **not** prevent heat-related illness
  - Contact your local health department for cooling center locations
  - Marylanders in need of energy assistance should call 2-1-1, Maryland's information and referral service
- **Avoid salt tablets** unless your doctor told you to take them
- **Take it easy outdoors.** Take short breaks if you feel tired. Schedule physical activity in the morning or evening, when it is cooler

## HEAT CRAMPS

### SIGNS

- Muscle pain/spasms
- Caused by loss of water and salt from heavy sweating

### TREATMENT

- Get the victim to a cool place
- Rest comfortable
- Stretch cramped muscles
- Drink fluids

## HEAT EXHAUSTION

### SIGNS

- Dehydration
- Cool, moist, pale, or flushed skin
- Extreme weakness
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea
- Headache
- May vomit or faint

### TREATMENT

- Drink fluids
- Rest in a cool, shaded area
- Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or do not improve in an hour

## HEAT STROKE

### SIGNS

- Body temp. over 105°F
- Dry, red skin
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Convulsions
- Disorientation
- Delirium
- Coma

### TREATMENT

- **Call 911**
- Cool bath or wet towels
- Do not give fluids if the victim refuses water, is vomiting, or has fainted

## MORE INFORMATION

 [preparedness.health.maryland.gov](http://preparedness.health.maryland.gov)

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Office of Preparedness  
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