



Heat and Exercise: Keeping Cool in Hot Weather

Whether you're running, swimming, or going for a power walk, take care when the temperature rises. If you exercise outdoors in hot weather, use these commonsense precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses.

How heat affects your body

Exercising in hot weather puts extra stress on your body. If you don't take care when exercising in the heat, you risk serious illness. Both the exercise itself and the air temperature and humidity can increase your core body temperature.

To help cool itself, your body sends more blood to circulate through your skin. This leaves less blood for your muscles, which in turn increases your heart rate. If the humidity also is high, your body faces added stress because sweat doesn't readily evaporate from your skin. That pushes your body temperature even higher.

How to avoid heat-related illnesses

- **Watch the temperature.** Pay attention to weather forecasts and heat alerts. Know what the temperature is expected to be for the duration of your planned outdoor activity. In running events, there are "flag" warnings that correspond to the degree of heat and humidity. For example, a yellow flag requires careful monitoring, and races are canceled in black flag conditions.
- **Get acclimated.** If you're used to exercising indoors or in cooler weather, take it easy at first when you exercise in the heat. It can take at least one to two weeks to adapt to the heat. As your body adapts to the heat over time, gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts.
- **Know your fitness level.** If you're unfit or new to exercise, be extra cautious when working out in the heat. Your body may have a lower tolerance to the heat. Reduce your exercise intensity and take frequent breaks.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Dehydration is a key factor in heat illness. Help your body sweat and cool down by staying well-hydrated with water. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink fluids. If you plan to exercise intensely, consider a sports drink instead of water. Sports drinks can replace the sodium, chloride, and potassium you lose through sweating. Avoid alcoholic drinks because they can actually promote fluid loss.
- **Dress appropriately.** Lightweight, loose fitting clothing helps sweat evaporate and keeps you cooler. Avoid dark colors, which can absorb heat. If possible, wear a light-colored, wide-brimmed hat.
- **Avoid midday sun.** Exercise in the morning or evening, when it's likely to be cooler outdoors. If possible, exercise in shady areas, or do a water workout in a pool.
- **Wear sunscreen.** Sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself and increases the risk of skin cancer.
- **Have a backup plan.** If you're concerned about the heat or humidity, stay indoors. Work out at the gym, walk laps inside the mall, or climb stairs inside an air-conditioned building.
- **Understand your medical risks.** Certain medical conditions or medications can increase your risk of a heat-related illness. If you plan to exercise in the heat, talk to your doctor about precautions.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/exercise/art-20048167>

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