



## Excessive Heat Warning Precautions

According to the National Weather Service of the United States, an excessive heat warning is issued within 12 hours of the heat index reaching one of two criteria levels, (1) if there is a heat index of at least 105° for more than three (3) hours per day for two (2) consecutive days, or (2) if the heat index is greater than 115° for any period of time.

Arizona is one of the hottest places on earth from June to September. Heat related illnesses are most common during the summer months. According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, approximately 800 people are admitted to hospitals each year due to heat related illnesses which often times turn fatal. Nearly 1500 weather related deaths from exposure to heat have occurred in Arizona between 1992 and 2009.

Evaporating sweat (perspiration) is your body's way of keeping cool. The body lets heat escape through the skin. Those at greatest risk for a heat-related illness are children under 4, adults over 65, homeless people, outdoor workers, people who are overweight, and people who are ill or on certain medications. Heat-related illness may be serious or even deadly if unattended.

In order to stay healthy during the summer months you must protect yourself by making sure you are drinking enough water and limiting your exposure to the heat. The Arizona Department of Health Services recommends you follow these simple rules:

**Drink water.** Even people that stay mostly indoors all day should drink at least two (2) liters of water per day. People that spend time outdoors should drink 1 to 2 liters per hour that they are outdoors. People that do strenuous activity outdoors should be very careful, being your body can lose up to four (4) liters of water per hour during strenuous activity. You should carry water with you and drink even if you do not feel thirsty. Be heat safe and avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body. Avoid using a salt tablet unless directed to do so by a physician.

**Dress for the heat.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. It is also a good idea to wear hats or to use an umbrella. Always apply sunscreen to exposed skin.

**Eat small meals and eat more often.** Avoid foods that are high in protein which increase metabolic heat.

**Slow down.** Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m.

**Stay indoors when possible.**

**Take regular breaks when engaged in physical activity on warm days.** Take time to find a cool place. If you recognize that you, or someone else, are showing symptoms of a heat-related illness, stop activity and find a cool place.

General care for heat emergencies includes cooling the body, giving fluids, and minimizing shock. For specific heat-related emergencies, follow these steps:

**For heat cramps or heat exhaustion:** Get the person to a cooler place and have the person rest in a comfortable position. If the person is fully awake and alert, give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let him or her drink too quickly. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as a towel or wet sheets or mist with water. Get the person into an air conditioned space if possible. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number if the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness.

**For heat stroke:** Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation! Help is needed fast. Call 9-1-1 or your local EMS number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body using any means available, including cool water and ice. If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. (Do not use rubbing alcohol because it closes the skin's pores and prevents heat loss.) Wrap wet sheets around the body and place the person in front of a fan or air conditioner. Watch for signals of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear. Keep the person lying down.

For more information on heat related illnesses contact the Arizona Department of Health Services, the Heat Relief Network or visit the Extreme Weather and Public Health homepage at [www.azdhs.gov](http://www.azdhs.gov).