

Tracking Links

[\(showHealthEffects.action\)](#)

[\(InfoByLocation\(\)\)](#)

[Environments \(showRiskLandingSolution.action\)](#)

[Population Health \(showPopulationData.action\)](#)

[Health Effects](#)

[Info by Location](#)

[Glossary A-Z](#)

[CDC A-Z](#)

[Tracking A-Z](#)



Quick Links

[Climate Change and Health \(showClimateChangeHealth.action\)](#)

[Climate Change Monitoring in the U.S. \(showClimateChangeMonitoring.action\)](#)

[Extreme Heat \(showClimateChangeExtremeHeat.action\)](#)

Extreme Heat

The Tracking Network collects data on heat-related deaths and illnesses throughout the United States and provides information so people can protect themselves.

Heat-related Deaths

Extreme heat events, or heat waves (`javascript:showGlossaryByTermName('Extreme heat event, heat wave')`), are a leading cause of extreme weather-related deaths in the United States. The number of heat-related deaths is rising. For example, in 1995, 465 heat-related deaths occurred in Chicago. From 1999 to 2010, a total of 7,415 people died of heat-related deaths, an average of about 618 deaths a year.

Heat Stress

Heat stress is heat-related illness caused by your body's inability to cool down properly. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating just isn't enough. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.

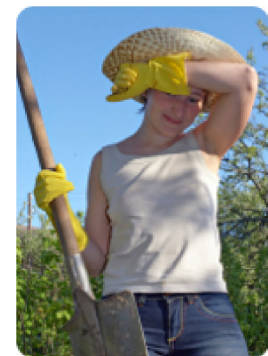
Several factors affect the body's ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. When the humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. Other conditions related to risk include age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use.

Heat stress ranges from milder conditions like [heat rash](#) (http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide-page-3.asp) and [heat cramps](#) (http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide-page-3.asp), to the most common type, [heat exhaustion](#) (http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide-page-3.asp). The most serious heat-related illness is [heat stroke](#) (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/faq.asp>). Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Read more about [heat stress](#) (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/faq.asp>).

Risk Factors

Anyone can develop heat stress. However, the following groups of people have higher risks for experiencing heat stress or heat-related death:



- Infants and children up to four years of age,
- People 65 years of age and older,
- People who are overweight, and
- People who are ill or on certain medications

More information for specific groups

(<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/specificgroups.asp>)

Prevention

Heat-related death or illnesses are preventable if you follow a few simple steps.

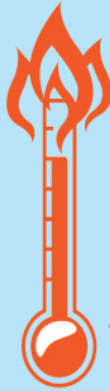
- Stay in an air-conditioned area during the hottest hours of the day. If you don't have air conditioning in your home, go to a public place such as a shopping mall or a library to stay cool. Cooling stations and senior centers are also available in many large cities for people of all ages.
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing.
- Drink water often. Don't wait until you are thirsty.
- Avoid unnecessary hard work or activities if you are outside or in a building without air-conditioning.
- Avoid unnecessary sun exposure. When in the sun, wear a hat, preferably with a wide brim.

Air conditioning is the strongest protective factor against heat-related illness. Exposure to air conditioning for even a few hours a day will reduce the risk for heat-related illness.

Read more prevention tips (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp>).



CLIMATE CHANGE & **EXTREME HEAT**



Extreme heat events, or heat waves, are a leading cause of **EXTREME WEATHER-RELATED DEATHS** in the United States and the number of heat-related deaths is rising!



WHO'S AT RISK?



Adults over 65, children under 4, people with existing medical problems such as heart disease, and people without access to air conditioning

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



STAY COOL

- Find an air-conditioned shelter
- Avoid direct sunlight
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing
- Take cool showers or baths
- Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device



STAY HYDRATED

- Drink more water than usual
- Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink more fluids
- Avoid alcohol or liquids containing high amounts of sugar
- Remind others to drink enough water



STAY INFORMED




- Check local news for extreme heat alerts and safety tips
- Learn the symptoms of heat illness

 **LEARN MORE!**

Visit CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network to learn more about climate change and extreme heat at

www.cdc.gov/ephtracking



 This symbol means you are leaving the CDC.gov Web site. For more information, please see CDC's [Exit Notification and Disclaimer \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) policy.

Copyrighted images: Images on this website which are copyrighted were used with permission of the copyright holder and are not in the public domain. CDC has licensed these images for use in the materials provided on this website, and the materials in the form presented on this website may be used without seeking further permission. Any other use of copyrighted images requires permission from the copyright holder.

Page created on: April 17, 2012

Page last updated: July 01, 2014

Content source: [National Center for Environmental Health, Environmental Health Tracking Branch](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333, USA
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

