

NEWS



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SUBJECT: Tips on How to Beat the Heat

(Jackson) - The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency would like to remind the citizens of Mississippi of the dangers associated with extreme heat. The following are some safety tips on how to minimize heat injuries and survive during the hot summer months. "People exercising or working during the hottest part of the day experience many heat emergencies," said Robert Latham, Director of MEMA.

- **Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity.** Reduce, eliminate or reschedule strenuous activities. High-risk individuals should stay in cool places. Get plenty of rest to allow your natural "cooling system" to work. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- **Avoid too much sunshine.** Sunburn slows the skin's ability to cool itself. The sun will also heat the inner core of your body, resulting in dehydration. Use a sunscreen lotion with a high sun protection factor (SPF) rating.
- **Postpone outdoor games and activities.** Extreme heat can threaten the health of athletes, staff, and spectators of outdoor games and activities.
- **Avoid extreme temperature changes.** A cool shower immediately after coming in from hot temperatures can result in hypothermia, particularly for elderly and very young people.
- **Stay indoors as much as possible.** If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, out of the sunshine. Even in the warmest weather, staying indoors, out of sunshine, is safer than long periods of exposure to the sun.
- **Keep heat outside and cool air inside.** Close any registers that may allow heat inside. Install temporary reflectors, such as aluminum foil covered cardboard, in windows and skylights to reflect heat back outside.
- **Conserve electricity not needed to keep you cool.** During periods of extreme heat, people tend to use a lot more power for air conditioning. Conserve electricity not used to keep you cool so power can remain available and reduce the chance of a community wide outage.
- **Vacuum air conditioner filters weekly during periods of high use.** Air conditioner filters can become clogged or filled with dirt, making them less efficient. Keeping them clean will allow your air conditioner to provide more cool air.

Page 1

NEWS



- **If your home does not have air conditioning, go to a public building with air conditioning each day for several hours.** Air conditioned locations are the safest places during extreme heat because electric fans do not cool the air. Fans do help sweat evaporate, which gives a cooling effect.
- Dress appropriately:
 - **Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing that will cover as much skin as possible.** Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight and helps maintain normal body temperature. Cover as much skin as possible to avoid sunburn and over-warming effects of sunlight on your body.
 - **Protect face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.** A hat will keep direct sunlight off your head and face. Sunlight can burn and warm the inner core of your body.
- **Drink plenty of fluids even if you do not feel thirsty.** Injury and death can occur from dehydration, which can happen quickly and unnoticed. Symptoms of dehydration are often confused with other causes. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease; who are on fluid-restrictive diets; or who have a problem with fluid retention should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake.
- **Take frequent breaks if you must work outdoors.** Frequent breaks, especially in a cool area or to drink fluids, can help people tolerate heat better.
- **Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat.** Partners can keep an eye on each other and can assist each other when needed. Sometimes exposure to heat can cloud judgment. Chances are if you work alone, you may not notice this.
- **Drink plenty of water regularly and often.** Your body needs water to keep cool. Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies.
- **Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them.** They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true about beer, which actually dehydrates the body.
- **Eat small meals and eat more often.** Large, heavy meals are more difficult to digest and cause your body to increase internal heat to aid digestion, worsening overall conditions. Avoid foods that are high in protein, such as meats and nuts, which increase metabolic heat.
- **Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.** Salt causes the body to retain fluids, resulting in swelling. Salt affects areas of your body that help you sweat, which would keep you cool. Persons on salt-restrictive diets should check with a physician before increasing salt intake.
- **NEVER leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles.** Temperatures inside a closed vehicle can reach over 140 degrees F within minutes. Exposure to such high temperatures can kill in minutes.

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