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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Take steps to stay cool*  
**Know the dangers of extreme heat**

As hot and hazy conditions return to the Tampa Bay area, here are some tips from the Pinellas County Health Department:

- **Schedule your outdoor activities carefully.** If you must be outdoors, try to limit your activity to morning and evening. Try to rest often indoors or in shady areas so that your body temperature will have a chance to recover.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Increase your fluid intake when it is hot outside – no matter your activity level. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink. If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask how much you should drink while the weather is hot. Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar. They cause you to lose more body fluids.
- **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen.** Choose lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool itself and causes a loss of body fluids. If you must go outdoors, protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat along with sunglasses and apply sunscreen 30 minutes before you go outdoors. Continue to reapply sunscreen according to the package directions.
- **Pace yourself.** If you are not used to hot weather, start slowly and pick up the pace gradually. If working or playing in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, stop everything. Get to a cool area or at least get into the shade, and rest, especially if you become lightheaded, confused, weak or feel like you are going to faint.
- **Stay indoors.** Stay indoors and, if possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home doesn't have air conditioning, try to go to the shopping mall or public library. Even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. Electric fans provide some comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness.
- **Check on others.** Anyone can have a heat-related illness but some people are at greater risk than others:
 

Babies and children up to four years of age	People who do too much during work or exercise outdoors
People 65 years of age or older	People who have chronic medical conditions
People who are overweight	
- **Use common sense.** Remember to keep cool and use common sense:
  - Avoid hot foods and heavy meals – they add heat to your body.
  - Drink plenty of fluids – especially water – even when you do not feel thirsty.
  - Dress infants and children in cool, loose clothing and protect them with hats or an umbrella.
  - Try not to be outside during mid-day hours
  - NEVER leave infants, children or pets in a parked car.
  - Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets and leave their water in a shady area.

Doing too much on a hot day or spending too much time in the sun can cause **heat-related illnesses**.

**(MORE)**

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▪ **Heat Rash** comes from sweating during hot, humid weather. It is most common in young children. Heat rash looks like pimples or small blisters. Keep the area dry. You can use powder if it makes you feel better, but do not use ointment or cream. They may make heat rash worse. Treating heat rash is simple and usually does not require seeing the doctor.

▪ **Sunburn** damages your skin. That's why it is important to wear sunscreen and to try to stay out of the sun. See a doctor if the sunburn affects a baby younger than one year of age or if you have any of the following: Fever, fluid-filled blisters or severe pain.

▪ **Heat cramps** usually affect people who sweat a lot. Sweating causes you to lose salt, which leads to painful cramps. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion. Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms – usually in the arms or legs – that may come from hard work or play when it's hot. Take these steps to treat heat cramps:

- Stop all activity and sit quietly in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Do not go back to hard work or play for a few hours after the cramps go away.
- Get medical help for heat cramps if they do not go away in an hour.

▪ **Heat exhaustion** can develop if you have spent several days in hot weather and have not had enough water to drink. You are more likely to get heat exhaustion if you are elderly, have high blood pressure or work in a hot environment.

**Warning signs of heat exhaustion include:**

- Heavy sweating
- Pale skin
- Muscle cramps
- Feeling tired, weak or dizzy
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Cool and wet skin

If you do not get help for heat exhaustion, it may get worse. You need to get cooled down. If you do not feel better in an hour, get to the doctor or emergency room. Here are some ways to get cooled down:

- Drink cool, nonalcoholic beverages
- Rest
- Take a cool shower, bath or sponge bath
- Get to a place that is air-conditioned
- Wear lightweight clothing

▪ **Heat stroke** happens when your body temperature gets out of control. Your temperature rises very fast, and you cannot sweat or cool down. Your temperature may rise to 106°F or higher very rapidly – within 10 to 15 minutes. You need to get emergency treatment right away! **Heat stroke can cause death.** Warning signs of heat stroke may include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees)
- Red, hot and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong heartbeat
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

**Heat stroke is a medical emergency.** Have someone call 911 for immediate medical assistance while you begin trying to care for the victim.

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*The Mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity.*