



Charlie Crist
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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Beware the Dangers of Extreme Heat

The Pinellas County Health Department urges you to take steps to avoid heat-related illnesses. You can suffer heat-related illness when your body's temperature control system overloads and your body can no longer cool itself.

The best way to prevent heat-related illness is prevention. Here are some prevention tips:

- Drink more fluids (non-alcoholic), regardless of your activity level. **Do not wait until you're thirsty to drink.** Don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar. They actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air-conditioning, visit a friend or go to a 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 may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Try to be outdoors before noon or in the evening.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, non-alcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage, such as Gatorade, can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. Warning: If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage. Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- **NEVER** leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle. **NEVER** leave a pet in a parked vehicle. Even if the vehicle is in the "shade," temperatures can heat up quickly to above one hundred degrees.

Check regularly on those at greatest risk of heat-related illness:

- Infants and children up to four years of age.
- People aged 65 or older.
- People who have a mental illness.
- Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure.
- Visit adults at risk at least two times a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching.

(MORE)



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Heat-Related Illnesses

The two worst types of heat-related illness are **heat exhaustion** and **heat stroke**.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion can include:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness or headache
- A "sick stomach" feeling or vomiting ("throwing" or "throwing up")
- Faintness ("falling out")

If these symptoms are severe or the person has heart problems or high blood pressure, get medical help right away. Otherwise, help the person cool off by having him do these things:

- Drink cool, non-alcoholic beverages such as water
- Rest
- Take a cool sponge bath (or if the person can stand safely, help him take a cool shower or bath)
- Change to lightweight clothing
- **Get medical help if symptoms get worse or last more than one hour**

If untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke. Up to 40 percent of people with heat stroke may die due to brain damage, even when they get appropriate medical help.

Warning signs of heat stroke can include:

- A body temperature of 103 degrees or higher
- Red, hot, and dry skin (although some victims may sweat)
- Throbbing headache or dizziness
- "Sick stomach" feeling
- Confusion or unconsciousness ("passing out")

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. If you think someone may have heat stroke, **call 911. Do not wait!**

Here are actions you can take while you wait for help to arrive:

- Move the person to a shady area.
- Use water to cool the person (cool him with water from a garden hose or sponge him off with cool water).
- Keep up your cooling efforts until the person's body temperature stays at 101-102 degrees.
- If the person can safely drink, give him non-alcoholic fluids. Water is best.

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