



Keep kids cool

When temperatures climb, protect your child from extreme heat



Young children and infants are especially vulnerable to heat illnesses during very hot weather. This fact sheet provides information about how to keep children healthy through the hot summer months. Talk to your doctor about how the heat might affect your child's health. While extreme heat affects all children, kids who are most at risk of suffering a heat illness are those who have:

- Breathing difficulties such as asthma
- Heart conditions
- Kidney problems
- Cognitive or physical disabilities
- Diarrhea
- Medications for these or other conditions

What is heat illness?

Heat illness is: suffering heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat fainting, heat edema (swelling of hands or feet), heat rash, and heat cramps. These can come on fast, and are mainly caused by over-exposure to heat. If not prevented, heat illness can lead to long-term health issues.

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Here are some steps you can take to prevent your child from suffering a heat illness during extreme heat:

Be prepared: Take note of local weather forecasts and know when hot weather is coming. If you have an air conditioner, make sure it's in working order before the heat starts. Otherwise, find some places nearby where you can go to cool off for a few hours, such as malls, community centres, or parks with splash-pads.

Be vigilant: Watch your child during extreme heat for signs of heat illness. These include:

- Behaviour changes, like unusual sleepiness or temper tantrums
- Dizziness or fainting
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headaches
- Rapid breathing
- Extreme thirst
- Decreased urination

If you see any of these signs during extreme heat, immediately move your child into a cool area and give them liquids to drink. Water is best, but other decaffeinated beverages are OK as well.

Provide lots of water: At all times, make sure to give your child plenty of cool liquids to drink, especially water, before they start to feel thirsty. Dehydration is very dangerous to your child's health. You can encourage your child to drink water by leaving a coloured cup by the sink, flavouring water, providing more fruit and vegetables because of their high water content, and making it part of their activity routine.

Keep your child cool. Dress your child in loose-fitting, breathable clothing during very hot days. Keep your home cool by using an air conditioner and fans, and try to avoid cooking meals that require using the oven. Block the sun with awnings or blinds during the day. You can also run cool baths or showers for your child to cool down in, with supervision.

Be heat smart: When the weather gets really hot, never leave your child in a parked car – the inside temperature of a vehicle climbs very quickly, especially if it's already hot outside. Reschedule or plan activities for cooler parts of the day, typically early morning or evening. Check the weather forecast for humidity levels and air quality indexes, since this can impact your child's ability to withstand the heat. Try to stay in shady areas – parks with shade from trees can be up to five degrees cooler than surrounding areas!

Heat stroke is a medical emergency

Seek medical care immediately if you or someone you're with is over-heated and feeling nauseous, confused, has suddenly stopped sweating, or has lost consciousness. While waiting for help, try to cool the affected person down right away by moving into a cool place if you can, or by applying cold water to large parts of the skin or clothing if possible.