



HEAT AND HEALTH FAQ



WHAT IS HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS IN CHILDREN?

With summers becoming increasingly hotter, protecting children from heat-related illness is especially important. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to heat because they depend on caregivers to keep them hydrated and cool.

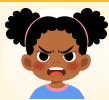
Exposure to heat can cause the body to get too hot and prevent it from cooling down. Symptoms can begin as dehydration or heat cramps that can lead to heat exhaustion or progress to life-threatening heatstroke, if not recognized and treated promptly. Heatstroke is a medical emergency in which body temperature rises dangerously, and it can damage the brain and other organs.

For all children, and especially those with chronic conditions like asthma, preventing and treating heat-related illness quickly is critical, as prolonged exposure to heat can disrupt children's sleep, attention, learning, and emotional well-being, and may worsen respiratory or other chronic health conditions.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS IN CHILDREN

Heat-related illness in children may look different from how it does in adults. For children, caregivers and child care providers should watch for behavioral changes as much as physical symptoms.

HEAT STRESS



Unusual Irritability

Sleepiness and lethargy



Reduced interest in play

Thirst and dry mouth



Less urination or dark urine

HEAT EXHAUSTION



Weakness



Faintness



Vomiting



Cool or clammy skin

HEAT STROKE



Confusion and altered behavior



Collapse or loss of consciousness



Very hot skin



If you notice these signs and symptoms in a child, it is critical to cool them as much as possible, as quickly as possible. If you notice signs of heat stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately.

RISK FACTORS The following factors increase the risk of heat-related illness.



Hot, humid weather



Active outdoor play



Inadequate water or shade



Hot indoor spaces or cars



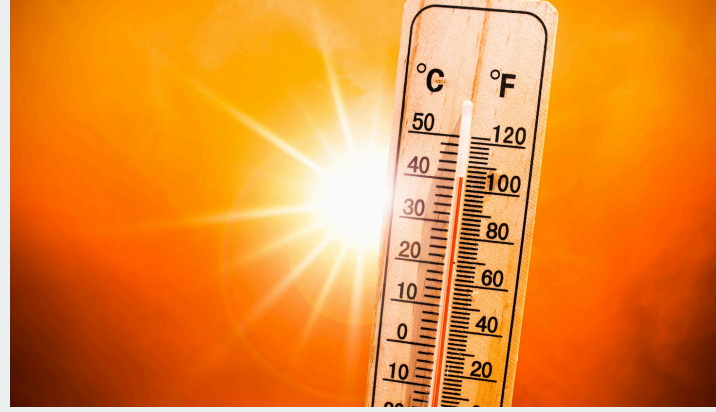
Infants and toddlers



Chronic conditions or taking certain medications

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AIR TEMPERATURE AND HEAT INDEX

Temperature alone is not the only factor that contributes to how hot heat can feel. Heat, or the heat index, is a combination of temperature and humidity (i.e., how much moisture is in the air). In high humidity, sweat evaporates more slowly, making it harder for the body to cool itself.



WHAT CAN CHILD CARE PROVIDERS DO TO PREVENT HEAT ILLNESS?



Check the heat index and [air quality index](#) to guide decisions. Schedule outdoor play in cooler morning hours, and reduce or cancel outdoor activities during peak heat. When the heat index reaches 90°F or higher, shorten outdoor time, limit vigorous play, increase shade and cooling breaks, or move activities indoors. High heat days can worsen [air quality](#).



Routinely offer water and build in frequent rest periods to help ensure children do not become dehydrated. Stay near cooled indoor spaces for quick transitions if children begin to overheat, and use shade and lightweight clothing to help keep them cool. Pay close attention to infants, toddlers, and children with chronic conditions for early signs of heat stress, and never leave a child in an unattended vehicle.



Improve outdoor areas with trees, shade structures, and natural surfaces to reduce temperatures. Always check playground surfaces—if they're too hot for an adult's hand, move play to shade or indoors. Natural surfacing such as mulch or grass generally stays cooler than synthetic materials (like concrete, or artificial turf), making it a safer choice during hot weather.

SUSPECT HEAT STRESS OR HEAT EXHAUSTION? ACT RIGHT AWAY

1

STOP



Stop activity.

2

MOVE



Bring the child to a cool or air-conditioned place.

3

REMOVE



Remove excess clothes and loosen tight clothing.

4

COOL



Cool the skin with water or cool, wet cloths.

5

HYDRATE



Offer small sips of water **only if the child is awake and can swallow.**

SUSPECT HEAT STROKE?

1



CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY

2

COOL RAPIDLY.

Use water and place ice packs at the neck, armpits, groin, and back.

3

CHECK BREATHING.

If the child is unconscious and not breathing normally, **begin CPR.**

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