

Beat the Heat

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The longest day of the year may be just behind us, but summer in Miami is just starting to heat up. We are fortunate enough to live in a city that enjoys a warm climate year round, but summer days can become insufferable.

Fortunately, the body has its own built-in way to keep cool. Heat escapes the body by perspiration through the skin. If the body does not cool properly or enough, a heat-related illness can occur, and it can become serious or even deadly if not treated quickly. Those most at risk are the elderly and children under the age of five.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue wants everyone to enjoy a safe summer by remembering the following tips.

- **Stay Hydrated!** Drink plenty of cool fluids throughout the day, but avoid those that contain caffeine, alcohol or high sugar content since they actually contribute to dehydration and make a heat-related illness worse.
- **Keep Cool.** Stay indoors in an air-conditioned place and limit your outdoor activities to the early morning or evening hours, avoiding the mid-day sun.
- **Dress for Success.** Dress for the heat by wearing lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. Wearing a hat or using an umbrella can also help.
- **Don't Sweat It.** If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports drink can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. Also try to exercise in the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning.
- **Eat Right.** Eat small meals more often and avoid foods high in protein that increase metabolic heat.
- **Pamper your Pets.** Don't forget your animals. Keep them in an air-conditioned area if possible and provide plenty of fresh water.
- **Can the Car.** Never leave anyone alone in a closed, parked vehicle. It takes only 10 minutes for the temperature to rise 19 degrees in a hot car. In 20 minutes, it rises 29 degrees.

On average, heat waves kill more people in the US than all other natural disasters combined. Heat-related illnesses usually progress in stages, so if you catch it at an early stage, you should be able to prevent the development of a life-threatening situation.

Victims of heat-related illness should be moved to a cool place and given cool water to drink. Ice packs or cool damp cloths should be applied to the skin. If the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Remember that in order to stay safe and healthy throughout the South Florida summer, you should beat the heat by staying hydrated and trying to plan outdoor activities during early morning or late afternoon hours.