

# Extreme Heat – Use Caution

Source: *Extreme Heat – A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety*;  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



## Pre-reading

Questions: What do think this reading is about? How might the text be helpful to you?

Definitions: Extreme heat – temperatures that are 10 degrees or more above the average high and last for many days or weeks

SPF – Sun Protection Factor

## Reading

Heat related deaths and illness are **preventable**. Yet, many people succumb to extreme heat.

14 Historically, from 1979 to 1999, excessive heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths in the United States.

29 During this period, more people in this country died from extreme heat than from hurricanes, lightning,  
45 tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. In 2001, 300 deaths were caused by excessive heat  
59 exposure.

60 People suffer heat related illness when their bodies are unable to properly cool themselves. The  
75 body normally cools itself by sweating. Under some conditions, sweating is not enough. In such cases, a  
92 person’s body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other  
107 vital organs.

109 Several factors affect the body’s ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. When the  
124 humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly.  
140 Other risk factors include age, obesity, heart disease, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use.

155 Air conditioning is the number one protective factor against heat related illness and death. If a  
171 home is not air conditioned, people can reduce their risk for heat related illness by spending time in  
189 public facilities that are air conditioned. Shopping malls and public libraries are good options. Even a  
205 few hours in a cool place can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.

224 During hot weather you need to increase your fluid intake, regardless of your activity level.  
239 Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink. If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or  
258 has you on water pills, ask how much you should drink while the weather is hot. Don’t drink liquids that  
278 contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar. These drinks cause you to loose body fluids. Very  
295 cold drinks should also be **avoided**. They can cause stomach cramps.

306 If outdoors, choose to wear lightweight, light colored, loose fitting clothing. Sunburn affects  
319 your body’s ability to cool itself and causes a loss of body fluids. It also causes pain and damages the  
339 skin. Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide brimmed hat, which also keeps you cooler, and by  
358 putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher thirty minutes before going outdoors. Read the package  
374 directions about how often to reapply the sunscreen.

382 If you must be outdoors, try to limit it to the morning and evening hours. If exertion in the heat  
402 makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, stop what you are doing. Get into a cool  
421 area, or at least into the shade, and rest.

430 Extreme heat can cause extreme problems for many people. Take care of yourself and others.  
445 Always protect yourself from extreme heat.

451

Level 7.5

## Understanding

1. Who is most at risk to suffer from a heat related illness? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does the word **avoid** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How does the body naturally cool itself? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are some possible effects of a very high body temperature? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What drinks should be avoided in hot weather? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. During what time of the day should a person avoid being outdoors? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What does the word **prevent/preventable** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How can you protect yourself from being a victim of the heat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: How does heat affect you? How do you stay safe in extreme heat?

Option C: Write about someone you know who has suffered a heat related illness.

---

---

---

---