



Extreme Heat Safety

In Rhode Island, when the outside temperature goes above 90 degrees for three or more days, it is a heat wave. If the hot temperatures last for several weeks, it is called extreme heat.

Heat waves and extreme heat can cause dust storms or droughts. For individuals, heat waves and extreme heat can cause sunburn or heat-related illness. Older adults, young children, and anyone who has a chronic health condition are more susceptible to heat-related illness.

Before a Extreme Heat:

- Learn about the symptoms of heat-related illness
- Install window air conditioners snugly. Insulate around the air conditioner if necessary.
- Install weather stripping around doors and windows to keep cool air inside the house.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with curtains, shades, blinds, etc.
- Keep storm windows up all year round.

Additional Resources:

- Visit riema.ri.gov/preparedness/threats&hazards/extremeheat for a current list of cooling centers.
- Visit health.ri.gov/healthrisks/extremeheat for additional info on what to do during periods of extreme heat.
- Visit dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/air/pm.htm for the current air quality forecast.

During Extreme Heat

- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of cool water throughout the day. Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- If you must be outside, wear a hat and use sunscreen to protect yourself from the sun.
- Avoid direct sunlight. Seek shade or air-conditioned buildings (i.e. libraries, malls, cooling centers, etc.) to keep cool.
- Avoid strenuous, outdoor physical activities. If you must exercise or work outdoors, do so in the morning when temperatures are potentially cooler.
- The elderly, infants, and anyone with chronic health conditions may be more likely to experience heat-related illness. Check on your family, friends, and neighbors and make sure they are able to stay cool and hydrated.
- Do not leave pets or children in the car. It takes only minutes for the temperature inside the car to reach deadly levels.
- Consider using RIPTA buses for travel. On air quality alert days, all RIPTA regular bus routes are free.



Heat-Related Illnesses

Heat, humidity, and high temperatures can push the human body beyond its normal limits. In extreme heat and high humidity, people sweat less and the body has to work extra hard to keep a normal temperature.

- **Heat Cramps:**

- Heat cramps are muscle pains and spasms caused by heavy exertion. Heat cramps are the mildest form of heat-related illness. They are usually the first sign that your body is having trouble keeping cool during the heat.

- **Heat Exhaustion:**

- Heat exhaustion usually occurs when you work or exercise in a hot, humid place and your body is dehydrated from lots of sweating. During heat exhaustion, blood flow to your skin increases, but it decreases the blood flow to your vital organs. Heat exhaustion causes mild shock, and if it is not treated, your body temperature keeps going up and could cause heat stroke.

Symptoms: Heavy sweating (even though skin may be cool, pale, or flushed); weak pulse; fainting; dizziness; nausea; vomiting; exhaustion; headache.

Treatment:

1. Lie down in a cool place.
2. Loosen or remove clothing.
3. Put cool, wet clothes on your body.
4. If possible, go to an air-conditioned place.
5. Take slow sips of cool water (about half a glass every 15 minutes). Do not drink water if you feel nauseous.
6. If you start vomiting, get medical help immediately.

- **Heat Stroke:**

- Heat stroke is a life-threatening medical emergency. Your body can no longer stay cool, and your temperature will keep getting higher. High body temperature can cause brain damage or death.

Symptoms: Temperature of 105 degrees or higher; hot, red, dry skin; rapid, weak pulse rapid, shallow breathing; no sweating, sometimes unconscious.

Treatment:

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Move person to a cooler place.
3. Remove the person's clothing.
4. Try using a cool (not cold) bath or wet cloth to lower the body temperature.
5. Use a fan or air conditioner to help lower the body temperature.

- **Sunburn:**

- Sunburn is a burn to skin caused by too much sun.

Symptoms: Skin redness and pain; swelling; blisters; fever; headache.

Treatment:

1. Take a cool shower and use soap to clean any oil or dirt from clogged pores. Unclogged pores will help your body cool down.
2. Apply sterile dressings to any blisters and see a doctor.