**Extreme Heat**

**What is Extreme Heat?**

Temperatures that hover 10 degrees or more above the average high temperature for the region and last for several weeks are defined as extreme heat. Humid or muggy conditions, which add to the discomfort of high temperatures, occur when a "dome" of high atmospheric pressure traps hazy, damp air near the ground. Excessively dry and hot conditions can provoke dust storms and low visibility.

**Terms**

* **Heat Advisory:** A heat advisory means that a period of hot temperatures is expected. The combination of hot temperatures and high humidity will combine to create a situation in which heat illnesses are possible.
* **Heat Wave:** Prolonged period of excessive heat, often combined with excessive humidity. The National Weather Service steps up its procedures to alert the public during these periods when it anticipates an increase in human heat-related illnesses.
* **Heat Index:** A number in degrees Fahrenheit (F) that tells how hot it really feels when relative humidity is added to the actual air temperature. Exposure to full sunshine can increase the heat index by 15 degrees.
* **Heat Cramps:** Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. Although heat cramps are the least severe, they are often the first signal that the body is having trouble with the heat.
* **Heat Exhaustion:** Heat exhaustion typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. If not treated, the victim's condition will worsen. Body temperature will keep rising and the victim may suffer heat stroke.
* **Heat Stroke:** Heat stroke is life-threatening. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.
* **Sunstroke:** Another term for heat stroke.

**If a Heat Wave is predicted or is happening do the following:**

* Slow down and avoid strenuous activities. If you must do strenuous activities, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4AM and 7 AM.
* Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, out of the sunshine.
* Electric fans do not cool the air, but they do help sweat evaporate which cools the body.
* Wear lightweight, light colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy.
* Drink plenty of fluids, regularly and often. Your body needs fluid to keep cool. Drink, even if you do not feel thirsty.

Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies. Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them. They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true about beer, which actually dehydrates the body.

* Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increase metabolic heat.
* Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.

**TIPS FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS:  
To reduce the risk of heat exhaustion, students should:**

* Remain hydrated by drinking water before, during, and after outdoor activities.
* Take frequent breaks while working or playing outdoors.
* Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid beverages that have caffeine or large amounts of sugar.
* Plan strenuous outdoor activities for cooler parts of the day.
* Eat more frequently, but make sure meals are light and well balanced.
* Move to a cooler location at first sign of heat illness (dizziness, nausea, headaches, muscle cramps). Rest for a few minutes and slowly drink a cool liquid.
* Pace physical activities, starting slowly and picking up the pace gradually.

The National Weather Service is responsible for issuing severe weather watches, warnings and advisories to alert the public.

For more information, please visit: [www.nws.noaa.gov/severeweather/index.shtml](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/severeweather/index.shtml) and [www.weathersafety.ohio.gov](http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov)