

Daily Union Article
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Title: Handling Heat

With the ongoing heat wave we have been experiencing, each of us should think about how we handle our outdoor events and activities. We need to be aware of the dangers of over exposure to the sun, heat, and humidity because these factors create the risk of heat related illnesses that can make us very ill. No doubt, heat-related illnesses should not be taken lightly.

When the temperature is extremely hot and humid, your body is challenged to keep itself cool. If you are accustomed to a temperature regulated work environment, then walking out of your office into the heat can heat up your body too fast. Any length of exposure to these extremes can result in feeling fatigued and drowsy. If your body loses too much fluid through dehydration or sweating, then you could very likely experience a heat-related illness.

Knowing the symptoms of heat-related illness and how to respond to them is the key to ensuring you don't experience an extreme or life-threatening response to the heat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer this important heat safety information:

Heat Stroke

Symptoms: High body temperature (103°F or higher); hot, red, dry, or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; headache; dizziness, nausea, confusion, and passing out.

Responses: Call 911 immediately – this is considered a medical emergency; move the person to a cooler place; help lower the person's temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath; do not give the person anything too cold to drink as this can cause stomach cramps

Heat Exhaustion

Symptoms: Heavy sweating; cold, pale and clammy skin; fast, weak pulse; nausea or vomiting; muscle cramps; tiredness or weakness; dizziness; headache; passing out.

Responses: Move to a cool place; loosen your clothes; put cool, wet clothes on your body or take a cool shower/bath; sip water. If you throw up, if symptoms get worse, or if the symptoms last longer than 1 hour, you need to seek medical attention immediately.

Heat Cramps

Symptoms: Heavy sweating during intense exercise; or muscle pain or spasms.

Responses: Stop physical activity and move to a cool place; drink water or a sports drink; wait for cramps to go away before you do any more physical activity. Seek

medical attention if cramps last more than an hour, if you're on a low-sodium diet, or you have heart problems.

Sunburn

Symptoms: Painful, red and warm skin; blisters on the skin.

Responses: Stay out of the sun until your sunburn heals, put cool cloths on sunburned areas or take a cool bath; put moisturizing lotion on sunburned areas; avoid breaking blisters to reduce possibility of infection.

Heat Rash

Symptoms: Red clusters of small blisters that look like pimples on the skin (usually found on the neck, chest, groin, or in elbow creases.)

Responses: Stay in a cool, dry place. Keep the rash dry. Use powder to soothe the rash.

Heat illness can also increase the risk of complications from other illnesses such as coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, emphysema or asthma. Any time your body is already stressed from another illness or chronic disease, being in the hot sun for any length of time can put you at risk. Consult with your doctor about how to best manage these hot and humid days in consideration of your health.

Your age can impact how Kansas summers impact you as well. Children under the age of 4 and those over the age of 65 are particularly vulnerable to heat illnesses because they adjust to heat less quickly than other people.

Heat illnesses are preventable. When you are planning for an outside event or activity in extreme heat, you can make choices that will reduce, if not entirely prevent, falling victim to this health condition.

- 1) Drink ample amounts of water. It is the best option for both quenching your thirst as well as avoiding heat illness. Keep the water consumption up throughout the day. If you wait until you are feeling thirsty, your body is already at risk. As a general rule, drink 4 cups (1 quart) of water every hour. If you are exerting yourself and sweating, increase your water consumption.
- 2) Don't push too hard. Give your body frequent and cool breaks. This will help it recover and refresh throughout the day.
- 3) Find shade whenever possible. If you are able to be in the shade all the time, wear a hat to provide shade to your face and neck. If at all possible, seek out air conditioning. This relieves your body of the stress it goes through to keep your temperature regulated when you are in the heat.

When the humidity climbs to above 60%, your body struggles to sweat enough to cool itself off. As humidity and heat rise, your body becomes much more vulnerable to heat

illnesses (see Heat Index graph.) For that reason, pay close attention to the weather forecast each morning and plan your day accordingly.

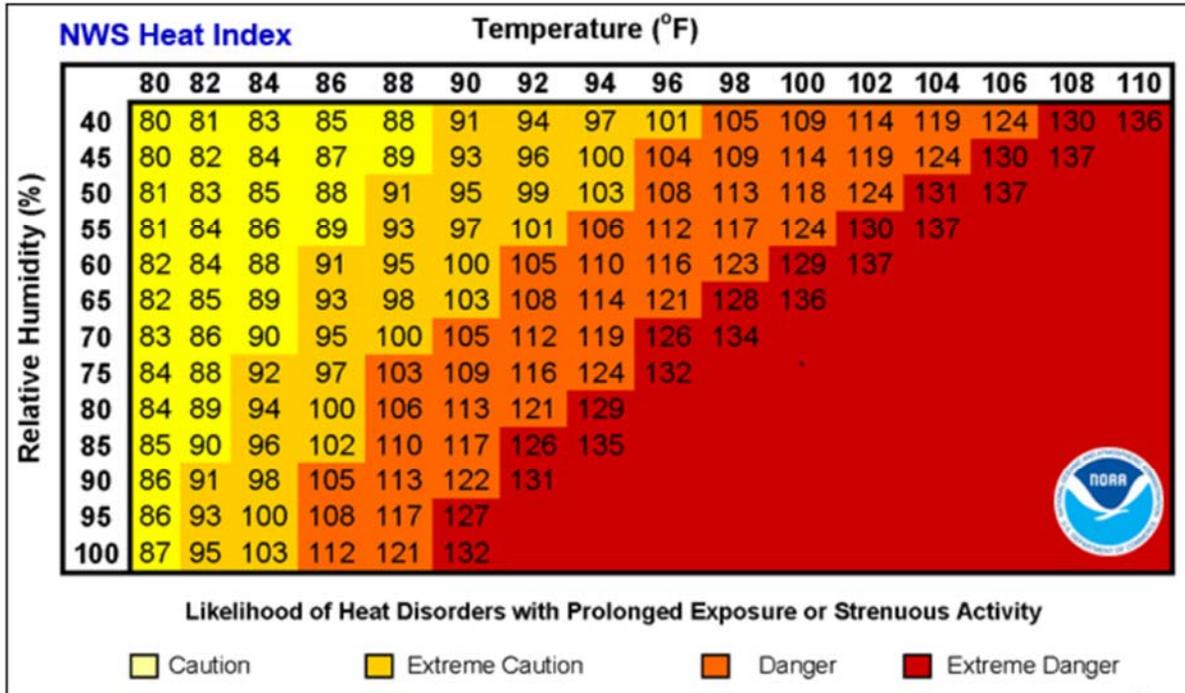


Illustration Source: www.weather.give/safety/heat-index

You can't control the heat and humidity, but you can control your activity level and exposure to the sun. If you have been outside in the heat for several hours, you'll need to replace your electrolytes, too. Eat a banana or drink a beverage that contains electrolytes – such as a sports drink. That doesn't replace the water you should be drinking. It simply gives your body a good boost from the electrolytes and a better chance at warding off heat illnesses.

Summer isn't nearly over yet. Take precautions to make sure you and your family can enjoy the rest of this hot and humid season in Kansas. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!