

# Beat the Heat!



Heat is one of the leading weather-related killers in the United States, resulting in hundreds of fatalities each year. North American summers are hot. East of the Rockies, summertime tends to combine both hot temperatures and high humidity, making daily physical activity more difficult. High heat and humidity put extra stress on your body because sweat doesn't readily evaporate to cool your skin. In cooling yourself, your heart rate also increases. Here are tips to make your daily walk safe during these sizzling summer months:

- **Schedule your walk or activities** for the coolest time of the day, either early morning or late evening. Take care if you are a child, older adult, or anyone with health issues.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Dehydration is a key factor in heat illness. Stay well-hydrated with water. Don't wait until you're thirsty. Consider sports drinks to replace electrolytes such as sodium, chloride, and potassium if you exercise intensely.
- **Dress appropriately.** Lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing allows sweat to evaporate and keeps you cooler. Wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed light-colored hat.
- **Protect yourself.** Use sunscreen and reapply according to the package directions. Sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself and increases the risk for skin cancer.
- **Get acclimated.** Gradually increase the length of time you are outside in the heat. This usually takes one to two weeks.
- **Watch for signs and symptoms** of heat-related illness: muscle cramps, nausea or vomiting, weakness, fatigue, headache, dizziness, confusion, low blood pressure, increased heart rate, profuse sweating, or visual problems. These can worsen and become a medical emergency.

Be safe during your summer walk and activities. Don't quit because of the heat!

**Sources:**

1. Mayo Clinic, Safety tips for hot weather exercise: <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mayoqahot-weather-exercise>
2. National Weather Service, Heat Safety: <https://www.weather.gov/grb/heat>
3. CDC, Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.htm>

*This publication has been peer reviewed and updated in 2025. Check out more Family Fun on the Run*

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