

Heat & Dehydration

People suffer from heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool themselves. The body normally cools itself by sweating, but under some conditions sweating just isn't enough. Several factors affect the body's ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. Some of these factors are age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn, certain medications and alcohol use. Heat-related illnesses are preventable. People with the greatest risk from heat-related illness are; infants and children up to 4 years of age who are sensitive to high temperatures; people over the age of 65; people with certain disabilities who may not compensate for heat stress efficiently and are less likely to sense and respond to change in temperature; people who take psychotropic medication; or people who are overweight.

Here are some things to consider when working with clients during hot summer months:

1. Encourage plenty of fluids. Water is the best choice. Discourage drinks with lots of sugar as these actually cause the body to lose additional fluid.
2. If nutritional support is given by G-Tube, additional water should be included along with scheduled feedings to ensure adequate hydration.
3. Avoid serving heavy meals - they add heat to the body.
4. Suggest light weight clothing and sunscreen with **SPF 15** (CDC 2013) or higher. A hat or visor to keep the sun off of the face is a good idea.
5. Never, never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
6. Limit outdoor activity to early morning or evening hours especially for clients on certain medications that may affect body temperature
7. Stay indoors, preferably in an air-conditioned place. Even a few hours in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler. Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90's an electric fan will not prevent heat-related illness. Contact the LA County Dept. of Public Health for a current list of cooling centers with A/C and water in your area.
8. Tricyclic Antidepressants, anti-hypertensives, NSAIDS, topical patches, allergy medication and some vitamins are affected by or cause sensitivity to heat. Know what meds clients are taking.
9. **Observe for a fast pulse, dry skin, flushed face, and headache that may be signs of heat stroke. HEAT STROKE REQUIRES IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY MEDICAL ATTENTION.**

For More Information about Heat:

Center for disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/extremeheat/index.html>

Extreme Heat: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.html>

Cooling Centers during Covid-19 Information LA County

[Cooling Center Locator](#)

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KEY POINTS:

- ▣ Hydrate with water
- ▣ Suggest light clothing.
- ▣ Keep clients indoors in air-conditioning.
- ▣ Limit outdoor activities especially for those on certain medications that may affect body temperature.