

THE FAMILY TREE

PROVIDING SOLUTIONS. PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE.

HELP YOUR CHILDREN SURVIVE HOT SUMMERS

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. Droughts occur when a long period passes without substantial rainfall. A heat wave combined with a drought is a very dangerous situation.

During Hot Weather

To protect your child's health when temperatures are extremely high, remember to keep cool and use common sense. Infants and children up to four years of age are sensitive to the effects of high temperatures and rely on others to regulate their environments and provide adequate liquids. The following tips are important:

Do Not Leave Children in Cars

Even in cool temperatures, cars can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly. Even with the windows cracked open, interior temperatures can rise almost 20 degrees Fahrenheit within the first 10 minutes. Anyone left inside is at risk for serious heat-related illnesses or even death.

Children who are left unattended in parked cars are at greatest risk for heat stroke, and possibly death. When traveling with children, remember to do the following:

- Never leave infants, children or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open.
- To remind yourself that a child is in the car, keep a stuffed animal in the car seat. When the child is buckled in, place the stuffed animal in the front with the driver.
- When leaving your car, check to be sure everyone is out of the car. Do not overlook any children who have fallen asleep in the car.

Drink Plenty of Fluids

During hot weather you will need to increase fluid intake, regardless of activity level. Don't wait until your child is thirsty to drink. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, children should drink to four glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids each hour.

Wear Appropriate Clothing and Sunscreen

Wear as little clothing as possible when you are at home. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing for your child. Dress infants and children in cool, loose clothing and shade their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella. If you must protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) along with sunglasses, and by putting on

sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels) 30 minutes prior to going out. Continue to reapply it according to the package directions.

Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully

If your child must be outdoors, try to limit outdoor activity to morning and evening hours. Try to allow for quiet play time often in shady areas so that your body's thermostat will have a chance to recover.

Stay Cool Indoors

Stay indoors with children and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library—even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help little bodies stay cooler when you go back into the heat.

Use Common Sense

Remember to keep cool and use common sense:

- Avoid hot foods and heavy meals—they add heat to bodies.
- Drink plenty of fluids and replace salts and minerals in your children's bodies.
- Limit sun exposure during mid-day hours and in places of potential severe exposure such as beaches.
- Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets, and leave the water in a shady area.
- If you have any lingering heat symptoms, call your doctor immediately or go to your local hospital.

*Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia.