

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4082
dwert@sbcounty.gov

Public Health offers tips for coping with the summer heat

With the arrival of the extremely hot weather, the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health recommends the public take measures to stay cool and avoid dehydration.

Infants, the very elderly, and those with medical conditions are at particular risk of developing heat-related problems. Very hot summers are expected in the Inland Empire; taking practical steps to keep cool can keep everyone safe.

Heat-related deaths and illness are preventable yet annually many people succumb to extreme heat. Historically, from 1979 to 1999, excessive heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths in the United States. During this period, more people in this country died from extreme heat than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. In 2001, 300 deaths were caused by excessive heat exposure.

Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others.

- ❑ 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.
- ❑ People 65 years of age or older may not compensate for heat stress efficiently and are less likely to sense and respond to change in temperature.
- ❑ People who are overweight may be prone to heat sickness because of their tendency to retain more body heat.

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- ❑ People who overexert during work or exercise may become dehydrated and susceptible to heat sickness.
- ❑ People who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications, such as for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation, may be affected by extreme heat.

Various measures one can take to avoid the heat include:

- ❑ Stay indoors in a cool building
- ❑ Drink plenty of water and replace salts and minerals in your body
- ❑ Avoid hot foods and heavy meals-they add heat to your body.
- ❑ Avoid outdoor exercise/activity during the very hot part of the day
- ❑ Wear loose-fitting clothing;
- ❑ Dress infants and children in cool, loose clothing and shade their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella.
- ❑ Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car.
- ❑ Visit elderly friends or relatives at risk and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- ❑ If you are 65 years of age or older, have a friend or relative call to check on you twice a day during a heat wave. If you know someone in this age group, check on them at least twice a day.
- ❑ Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets, and leave the water in a shady area.

If a home is not air-conditioned, people can reduce their risk for heat-related illness by spending time in public facilities that are air-conditioned.

Those with medically-related heat sensitivity or who otherwise cannot access a cool environment are encouraged to seek out a Cooling Station or other local cool area. Southern California Edison sponsors Cooling Stations in various parts of San Bernardino County. To see if there is one near you, search the web at www.sce.com and type in Cooling Stations in the "Search Box".

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Senior or Community Centers are cool locations where seniors may be able to visit during peak temperature times of the day. Shopping malls, neighborhood markets; or movie theaters may also be available for emergency situations. These locations, however, are private establishments and may require permission, admission fees, or a purchase.