

Keep Your Cool: Exercising Safely In Summer Heat



Summer is officially here. Finally you can pack away your jackets and get outside.

Summer offers extras hours of daylight and with it the opportunity to spend even more time enjoying outdoor activities. For many, this means more time doing physical activities and playing sports.

So, it's important to remember the potential dangers that also come with exercising in hot conditions. As long as you know the dos and don'ts of working out in the heat, then you can fully take advantage of all the fun of summer.

What you should do:

- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids. It's extremely important to stay hydrated. If you're thirsty then you are already dehydrated; drink before you feel a need to. Be sure to drink throughout the day (stick to non-caffeinated beverages, preferably water). Also, drink 15-20 minutes before beginning your workout and every 15 minutes throughout the exercise.
- ✓ Eat regularly. The heat can decrease your appetite, but it's important to eat normally. Try to eat small meals 5-6 times per day. Include lots of fruits and vegetables. Aside from being nutritious, fruits also tend to help with hydration.
- ✓ Wear light, loose fitting clothes that can breathe. Cotton is always a good choice. If your outdoor activity produces a lot of perspiration, consider clothing that is designed to wick the sweat away.
- ✓ Wear sunscreen. Even if you exercise early in the morning or late in the evening, if the sun can reach you then you can get burned. Not only is a sunburn bad on the skin and potentially dangerous but it also hinders your body's ability to stay cool.
- ✓ Use common sense and don't attempt strenuous activities that your body is not accustomed to. Stick to exercises that you are very familiar and comfortable with.
- ✓ Check the weather forecast. It's best not to participate in intense outdoor exercise sessions when the heat index registers in the dangerous zone.



What you should not do:

- ✓ Don't try to diet by sweating. Excessive perspiration is not the key to permanent weight loss. Any decrease in the scale would simply be a result of water loss, not fat reduction.
- ✓ Don't adapt the "no pain, no gain" motto. Ignoring your body's signals could be dangerous. Heat-related illnesses come with warning signs. Be sure to learn how to recognize them and what actions to take.
- ✓ Don't forget to drink plenty of liquid when swimming. Just because your body is surrounded by water does not mean that you are well-hydrated. As with any land exercises, you need to regularly replenish lost fluids when in the pool.
- ✓ Avoid physical activity during the hottest part of the day, which usually is between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- ✓ If you want (or need) to be working in very hot temperatures, don't do it until you become acclimated. Try to spend only a few minutes per day in the hot conditions for the first couple of weeks and then add time gradually each day.
- ✓ Avoid extreme changes in temperature. Don't hop from being extremely hot and sweating excessively right into an ice cold, air-conditioned environment. Try to cool your body down slightly before exposing it to the extreme temperature variation. Whether you have to work outside or do it for enjoyment, following the above tips will help you stay cool and safe during the dog days of summer. So, don't spend the season cooped up, get out there and have some fun!



About the Author...

Lynn Bode is a certified personal trainer specializing in Internet-based fitness programs. She founded *Workouts For You*, which provides affordable online exercise programs that are custom designed for each individual.

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