

Hot Texas summers- there's nothing quite like it! Careful—extreme heat not only kills lawns, it can also push your body beyond its limits. Older adults, young children, and those who are sick or overweight are most likely to suffer when the mercury rises. Droughts and wildfires can also be the result of super-hot temperatures, low amounts of rainfall and careless behavior. Learn how to take protective measures to safeguard yourself and your environment.

Hot Stuff: Get the Facts

- In a normal year, approximately 175 Americans die from extreme heat. Young children, elderly people, and those who are sick or overweight are more likely to become victims.
- Between 1936 and 1975, nearly 20,000 people succumbed to the effects of heat and solar radiation.
- Because men sweat more than women, men are more susceptible to heat illness because they become dehydrated more quickly.

Heat-Related Illnesses

High temperatures, like the kind we experience in a Texas summer, along with high humidity, can cause heat-related illnesses which range in severity from mild heat cramps, to heat exhaustion, to potentially life-threatening heatstroke.

Drought Information

[Get up-to-date drought information for Texas.](#)

Heat Cramps

Painful, involuntary muscle spasms. They may occur during heavy exercise and are often caused by dehydration.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Spasms that feel like nighttime leg cramps, only more severe. They often occur in the calves, arms, abdomen and back.

If you suspect heat cramps:

- Cool down and rest.
- Drink an electrolyte-containing sports drink or clear juice.
- Gently stretch and massage the affected muscles.
- Call your doctor if your cramps don't go away in one hour.

Heat Exhaustion:

Exhaustion that begins suddenly and is sometimes caused by heavy exercise, sweating and dehydration.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Low blood pressure
- Cool, moist skin
- Low-grade fever
- Feeling faint
- Nausea
- Heavy sweating
- Rapid, weak heartbeat

If you suspect heat exhaustion:

- Move the person to a shady area.
- Lay them down and slightly elevate their legs and feet.
- Loosen or remove their clothing.
- Give them cool water (not iced) or a sports drink containing electrolytes to drink.
- Fan the person and spray or sponge them down with cool water.
- Remember: Heat exhaustion can quickly become heatstroke. If fever greater than 102°F, fainting, confusion or seizures occur, dial 9-1-1.

Heatstroke:

A potentially life-threatening, heat-related problem that often results from heavy work and dehydration. The body's normal mechanisms for dealing with heat stress, such as sweating and temperature control, stop working. Older adults, people who are obese and people born with an impaired ability to sweat are at high risk of heatstroke.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Body temperature, generally greater than 104°F, with changes in mental status like confusion and even coma.
- Skin may be hot and dry, although in heatstroke caused by exertion, the skin ^{is} usually moist.
- Rapid heartbeat.
- Rapid and shallow breathing.
- Elevated or lowered blood pressure.
- Sweating stops.
- Irritability, confusion or unconsciousness.
- Fainting, which may be the first sign in older adults.

If you suspect heatstroke:

- Move the person into the shade or air-conditioned space.
- Dial 9-1-1.
- Wrap the person with damp sheets or spray them with cool water.

[Source](#)

Extreme Heat – At-Home Safety Tips:

- Stay out of the sun as much as possible. Use sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher).
- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic and caffeine-free fluids.
- Install window air conditioners snugly; insulate if necessary.
- Check air-conditioning ducts for proper insulation.
- Weather-strip doors and sills to keep cool air in.

Extreme Heat – Outdoor Safety Tips:

- Help prevent drought by watering your lawn only when necessary and by adhering to local water restrictions.
- Help prevent wildfires by respecting “no burn” days.
- Avoid roadside fires by disposing of cigarettes responsibly.
- Dispose of hot charcoal in a non-flammable container or hose down before dumping.