

5 Steps to Ready

The effects of climate change are here, and so are the health challenges caused by extreme weather. Heat waves are among the most dangerous disasters. Protect yourself and your family with these easy steps.

1. Make a plan

- Know where you'll go to cool down if you don't have air conditioning or the power goes out. Cooling centers, libraries, public pools, shopping malls or movie theaters could be options.
- Identify people in your family and community at higher risk from extreme heat [\[list can be found here\]](#) and check on them regularly.
- Power outages during extreme heat pose a significant risk, especially for people who rely on air conditioning and/or electricity dependent medical equipment. If you're able to purchase a generator, it is important to consider ongoing maintenance, installing a generator switch and carbon monoxide risks. Smaller battery power stations may be adequate for medical equipment but may not be able to power air conditioners for very long.

2. Build a kit

Hydration essentials:

- o Carry more water than you think you'll need when spending time outdoors or using public transportation. Vacuum-insulated reusable water bottles are great for keeping water cool for extended periods.

Cooling equipment:

- o Have fans in the house, including battery-powered fans to use during power outages. Note that using a fan when the air temperature is higher than your body temperature (above 95°F) can make you feel hotter. However, combining fans with skin-wetting techniques (like using wet towels, misters or cold showers) can facilitate evaporation and help you stay cool.

Self-cooling tools:

- o Keep spray bottles on hand. Self-dousing (wetting your skin in front of a fan) can provide relief and help you stay safe and comfortable during extreme heat.
- o Have a foot soaking tub available for soaking your feet in cold water, as this can also provide temporary relief during extreme heat events.
- o If possible, keep frozen water bottles accessible to use as ice packs. You can also freeze wet t-shirts to use during extreme heat events to keep you cool.

3. Consider your medications

- If the medications you take require refrigeration, talk with your pharmacist or provider about what you should do if you lose power.
- Certain medical conditions can decrease the body's ability to regulate temperature and sweat. Talk with your pharmacist or provider about whether or not any of your medications could impair your ability to stay cool – and actions you can take to reduce this risk.
- If possible, keep at least seven days of medication on hand.

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4. Prepare to stay cool

- Ensure your air conditioning system, fan or evaporative cooler is working. For air conditioning and evaporative coolers, make sure to replace filters/pads according to their instruction manuals to ensure efficiency and reduce risk of failure.
- Wear loose, lightweight and light-colored clothing, and remember – with air flow – cool, damp cloths can help draw heat from the body.
- If outdoors, wear sunscreen or UPF-rated clothing to reduce the likelihood of sunburn, which can impact your body's ability to stay cool.
- Avoid strenuous activities as much as possible and limit time outside during the hottest parts of the day.
- If you must perform activities outdoors, drink plenty of water, pace yourself and take frequent breaks in cool, shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- Drink plenty of water, and electrolytes if you are sweating profusely. If possible, try to reduce consumption of highly caffeinated drinks, sugary drinks and alcohol.

5. Stay informed

- Learn to recognize the signs of heat-related illnesses and seek immediate medical attention if you, or someone you know, has any symptoms. [\[link to heat tip sheet\]](#)