

## EXTREME HEAT AND HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

Summer temperatures in Virginia normally climb into the upper 90's and even reach over 100 degrees at times. The hot temperatures and high heat indexes can cause ill health effects.

The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating just isn't enough. Prolonged exposure to heat can cause cramping, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and even death. It is important to stay hydrated and seek cool temperature environments until the heat subsides.

Here are some tips to avoid heat-related illness during the summer:

**Drink water.** When the temperature rises, it is important to drink plenty of water. Drinks that contain caffeine, large amounts of sugar or alcohol should be avoided because they can cause you to become dehydrated.

**Keep cool indoors.** On hot days, prevent illness by keeping cool indoors. If your home is not air conditioned, try to spend the hottest hours of the day in a cool public place such as a library, movie theater, or store.

**Dress for the heat.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. It is also a good idea to wear hats or to use an umbrella. Always apply sunscreen to exposed skin.

**Limit physical activity.** Avoid excessive physical exertion in hot temperatures, especially in the middle of the day. If you must work outdoors, stay hydrated by drinking 2-4 glasses of water each hour and take frequent breaks in a cool place. Even a few hours in an air-conditioned environment reduces the danger of heat-related illness.

**Do not keep children or pets in cars.** Temperatures inside a car with windows up can reach over 150 degrees quickly, resulting in heat stroke and death.

**Check on your neighbors.** Although anyone can suffer heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. People aged 65 or older are particularly susceptible to heat-related illnesses and complications that can result during periods of high temperatures and humidity.

### Heat-Related Weather Terms:

Understanding heat-related weather terminology can help you and your family prepare for hot weather.

- **Heat Index:** is a measure of how hot it feels when relative humidity is added to the air temperature.
- **Excessive Heat Outlooks:** Issued when the potential exists for an excessive heat event in the next 3-7 days.
- **Excessive Heat Watches:** Issued when conditions are favorable for an excessive heat in the next 24 to 72 hours.

- **Excessive Heat Warning/Advisories:** Issued when an excessive heat is expected in the next 36 hours.

### **Signs & Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness:**

Several heat-related health conditions can cause serious health problems. When temperatures are on the rise, watch for the following symptoms:

**Dehydration—** Dehydration is caused by the excessive loss of water and salts from the body due to illness or from prolonged exposure to heat. Severe dehydration can become a life-threatening condition if not treated.

**Heat Cramps—** Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy physical activity in hot environments. Muscles most often affected include those of your calves, arms, abdominal wall and back. If you are suffering from heat cramps, rest for several hours and drink clear juice or an electrolyte-containing sports drink.

**Heat Exhaustion—** Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses too much water and salt from sweating during hot temperatures. The elderly, people who work outside and people with high blood pressure are most at risk of heat exhaustion. Continued exposure may lead to heat stroke, which is life-threatening.

**Heat Stroke—** Heat stroke is caused by prolonged exposure to high temperatures or by doing physical activity in hot weather. Sweating has usually stopped and your body temperature becomes too high; body temperatures can reach as high as 106 degrees in 15 minutes. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition and you should seek immediate medical attention if you or someone you know is suffering from heat stroke.

### **Heat-Related Illness in Virginia**

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) receives data on visits to emergency departments and urgent care centers in Virginia for purposes of public health surveillance. These data are analyzed through a syndromic surveillance system, known as ESSENCE, to monitor the health of the community and identify emerging trends of public health concern. In response to extreme heat, the Office of Epidemiology, Division of Surveillance and Investigation conducts surveillance for heat-related illness.

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/public-relations-contacts/severe-weather-preparedness/extreme-heat-and-heat-related-illnesses/>

Baptist General Convention of Virginia

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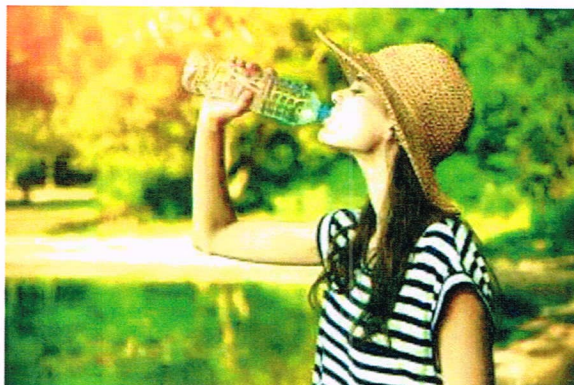
# SUMMER INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION

Summer is a perfect time to enjoy the great outdoors, be active and spend time with friends and family. As schools let out and summer approaches, it is important for us to remember to stay healthy and safe under the sun and in the water. This summer, take precautions to help keep your family safe from disease and germs:

- Keep cool and seek shade during the midday hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) when ultraviolet (UV) rays are at the greatest.
- Wear clothing that protects the skin such as a wide-brimmed hat to shade the face and sunglasses to protect yourself from exposure to UV rays.
- Use sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher, and both UVA and UVB protection. Remember to reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours and after swimming, sweating, and toweling off.
- Check your pool to see if it is at the proper chlorine level (1–3 mg/L or parts per million [ppm]) and pH (7.2–7.8) to maximize germ-killing power.
- Don't swim when ill and don't swallow the water; chlorine and other disinfectants don't kill germs instantly.

Enjoy your time outdoors and in the water, and take steps to be healthy.

## PREVENT HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS



- NEVER leave any children, pets or adults in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- Stay indoors or find a cooling center in your area on extremely hot days.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Stay indoors during extremely hot temperatures.
- Use sunscreen, even on cloudy days; skin does not have to feel hot to get burned
- Apply sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or greater at least 20 minutes before going outside.
- Wear protective sunglasses and hats.

### Health & Wellness Ministry

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# Be Red Cross Ready

## Hurricane Safety Checklist

Hurricanes are strong storms that cause life- and property-threatening hazards such as flooding, storm surge, high winds and tornadoes.

Preparation is the best protection against the dangers of a hurricane.

### Know the Difference

**Hurricane Watch**—Hurricane conditions are a threat within 48 hours. Review your hurricane plans, keep informed and be ready to act if a warning is issued.

**Hurricane Warning**—Hurricane conditions are expected within 36 hours. Complete your storm preparations and leave the area if directed to do so by authorities.

### What should I do?



- ☐ Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio for critical information from the National Weather Service (NWS).
- ☐ Check your disaster supplies and replace or restock as needed.
- ☐ Bring in anything that can be picked up by the wind (bicycles, lawn furniture).
- ☐ Close windows, doors and hurricane shutters. If you do not have hurricane shutters, close and board up all windows and doors with plywood.
- ☐ Turn the refrigerator and freezer to the coldest setting and keep them closed as much as possible so that food will last longer if the power goes out.
- ☐ Turn off propane tanks and unplug small appliances.
- ☐ Fill your car's gas tank.
- ☐ Talk with members of your household and create an evacuation plan. Planning and practicing your evacuation plan minimizes confusion and fear during the event.
- ☐ Learn about your community's hurricane response plan. Plan routes to local shelters, register family members with special medical needs as required and make plans for your pets to be cared for.
- ☐ Evacuate if advised by authorities. Be careful to avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges.
- ☐ Because standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flooding, it's important to have protection from the floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact the U.S. For more information on flood insurance, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program Web site at [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov).

### What supplies do I need?



- ☐ Water—at least a 3-day supply; one gallon per person per day
- ☐ Food—at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- ☐ Extra batteries
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Medications (7-day supply) and medical items (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, cane)
- ☐ Multi-purpose tool
- ☐ Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- ☐ Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- ☐ Cell phone with chargers
- ☐ Family and emergency contact information
- ☐ Extra cash
- ☐ Emergency blanket
- ☐ Map(s) of the area
- ☐ Baby supplies (bottles, formula, baby food, diapers)
- ☐ Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowl)
- ☐ Tools/supplies for securing your home
- ☐ Extra set of car keys and house keys
- ☐ Extra clothing, hat and sturdy shoes
- ☐ Rain gear
- ☐ Insect repellent and sunscreen
- ☐ Camera for photos of damage

### What do I do after a hurricane?



- ☐ Continue listening to a NOAA Weather Radio or the local news for the latest updates.
- ☐ Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding even after the hurricane or tropical storm has ended.
- ☐ If you evacuated, return home only when officials say it is safe.
- ☐ Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.
- ☐ Keep away from loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company.
- ☐ Stay out of any building that has water around it.
- ☐ Inspect your home for damage. Take pictures of damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance purposes.
- ☐ Use flashlights in the dark. Do NOT use candles.
- ☐ Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- ☐ Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- ☐ Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- ☐ Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control.
- ☐ Use the telephone only for emergency calls.

### Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community has experienced a hurricane, or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through [RedCross.org/SafeandWell](http://RedCross.org/SafeandWell) to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call 1-866-GET-INFO to register yourself and your family.



For more information on disaster and emergency preparedness, visit [RedCross.org](http://RedCross.org).