



[GoodHealthOutcomes.org](http://GoodHealthOutcomes.org)  
A Telehealth Company for Select Customers  
1317 Edgewater Drive Suite 5236  
Orlando, FL 32804  
Voice 904.590.9598, Fax 317.342.5462  
Email: [Contact@GoodHealthOutcomes.org](mailto:Contact@GoodHealthOutcomes.org)

---

## Staying Safe in the Heat: Managing Extreme Heat Hazards at Home

Extreme heat is not just uncomfortable; it is a serious environmental health hazard that can quickly become life-threatening. When the body is exposed to extreme temperatures, its natural cooling mechanisms (like sweating) can fail, leading to rapid heat-related illnesses.

Understanding the progression of these conditions helps you deploy effective at-home self-care or recognize when a situation has turned into a medical emergency.

---

### The Progression of Heat Illness: Signs & Symptoms

Heat-related illnesses generally progress from mild dehydration and cramping to dangerous systemic failure.

#### Heat Exhaustion (Act Immediately)

**This occurs when your body loses excessive amounts of water and salt, typically through heavy sweating.**

- **What to look for:** Heavy sweating, a rapid but weak pulse, dizziness or lightheadedness, headache, nausea, muscle cramps, and pale, clammy skin.

#### Heat Stroke (Severe Medical Emergency)

This is the most severe heat-related illness. It occurs when the body's internal temperature controls fail completely, and its core temperature rises rapidly to 103F or 39.4C or higher within minutes. Heat stroke can cause permanent disability or death if untreated.

- **What to look for:** High body temperature, hot, red, dry, or damp skin (the body may *stop* sweating entirely), a rapid and strong pulse, confusion, altered mental state, slurred speech, or loss of consciousness.
- 

### Best Self-Care Techniques for Heat Management

If you or a loved one are showing early signs of heat exhaustion, take immediate steps to cool down the body and restabilize fluids:

**Evacuate the Heat:** Move immediately to a shaded or air-conditioned indoor area. Keep physical movement to an absolute minimum.

**Cool the Skin Surface:** Apply cool, damp cloths to the skin, or take a cool bath or shower. Directing a fan at wet skin accelerates cooling through evaporation.

**Perform Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT):** Sweating depletes both water and vital minerals. Drinking plain water in large quantities is inefficient because your cells need electrolytes to absorb fluid properly.

**The Strategy:** Sip a standard Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) such as Pedialyte, Hydralyte, or homemade mixture.

**The Rule:** Sip, don't gulp. Drink small amounts frequently (1 to 2 tablespoons every few minutes).

Gulping large amounts of fluid can upset a sensitive stomach and trigger vomiting, worsening dehydration.

---

## Crucial Self-Care Warnings & Hazards

**When treating heat-related issues, certain common instincts can actually cause harm. Keep these safety parameters in mind:**

- **Avoid Diuretics:** Do not consume caffeinated coffee, tea, energy drinks, sodas, or alcohol when dealing with heat stress. These act as diuretics, accelerating fluid loss through urination and making dehydration worse.
  - **Watch for Neonatal Red Flags:** Young children and infants are incredibly vulnerable to heat. Watch for urgent pediatric signs of dehydration such as no wet diapers for 8 hours or more, an absence of tears when crying, or sunken soft spots on an infant's head.
  - **Know the Limits of At-Home Care:** Never attempt to manage severe heat illness at home if the individual cannot keep fluids down, is experiencing confusion, or has fainted. These symptoms require immediate treatment likely with IV re-hydration therapy.
- 

## Emergency Protocol: When to Seek Immediate In-Person Care

A telehealth visit or home care is completely inappropriate if a heat hazard escalates to a systemic crisis. Seek emergency services or transport the individual to the nearest emergency room immediately if you observe:

1. **Signs of Heat Stroke:** Any confusion, slurred speech, unconsciousness, or a body temperature at or above 103F.
  2. **Inability to Hydrate:** Persistent vomiting that prevents the individual from keeping small sips of an oral rehydration solution down.
  3. **Absence of Urination:** If the individual has not urinated in 8 hours or more, their kidneys are under severe distress from fluid depletion.
- 

**Proactive Preparation:** Don't wait for a heat wave to plan ahead. Review the comprehensive baseline strategies for protecting your body during environmental shifts by reading the [Staying Healthy in the Heat](#) guidelines, and make sure your home is equipped with the core diagnostic tools listed in the [Home Diagnostic Kit List](#).

The above information was reviewed and validated by David Campbell-O'Dell, DNP, APRN-IP, FNP-BC, FAANP