

# Extreme Heat and Cold

**C**ertain weather conditions can result in temperatures that reach either extreme heights or extreme lows. In both cases, you should be aware of the types of weather conditions and what you should do to prepare. The elderly, young children and those who are sick are more in danger of being affected by extreme temperatures.

These procedures are not substitutes for proper medical care. Knowing what to do is an important part of protecting your health and the health of others.

## Be Prepared for Extreme Weather

### Heat

- Stay indoors and drink plenty of water.
- Avoid overexertion.
- Dress in loose fitting clothing, preferably light colored.
- Avoid intake of alcoholic or caffeinated beverages.
- Do not leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, awnings or louvers that can reduce the heat that enters a home by up to 80%.
- Sunburn slows the skin's ability to cool itself. Use a sunscreen lotion with a high SPF (sun protection factor) rating (i.e., 15 or greater).
- Remember to check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning and spend most of their time alone.

### Cold

- Try to stay indoors if possible
- Dress warmly and stay dry
- Understand wind chill- as the speed of wind increases, it quickly carries heat away from the body.
- Avoid exertion as cold weather puts an added strain on the heart.
- If you must do heavy outside chores, dress warmly and work slowly.
- Avoid ice- many cold weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps and driveways.

## Extreme Weather Terms

### Heat

Heat Wave: Prolonged period of excessive heat and humidity.

Heat Index: Number in degrees Fahrenheit (F) that indicates how hot it feels when relative humidity is added to the air temperature.

### Cold

Frost/Freeze Warning: Below freezing temperatures expected.

Wind Chill: Describes what happens to a body when it is cold and windy outside.

## Conditions Associated with Extreme Weather

### Heat

† **Heat Cramps:** Muscular pains/spasms due to heavy exertion -often the first signal that the body is in trouble. Suspend activity and move to a cool location.

† **Heat Exhaustion:** Body fluids are lost through heavy sweating from exertion or humidity. Blood flow to the skin increases, and blood flow to vital organs decreases.

#### Signaled by:

- Cool, moist, pale or flushed skin
- Heavy sweating, headache
- Nausea/vomiting/dizziness/exhaustion

#### Treatment:

- Move out of heat into cooler location
- Remove or loosen clothing-apply cool, wet cloths
- Give cool water to drink if conscious
- Allow person to rest and watch carefully

† **Heat Stroke:** Individual's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. Body temperature rises causing brain damage. Death can result if body not quickly cooled.

#### Signaled by:

- Hot, red skin
- Changes in consciousness
- Weak, rapid pulse and rapid, shallow breathing
- High body temperature

#### Treatment:

- Call 911 immediately
- Locate individual in cooler location
- Attempt to cool body quickly- cool bath, fan or wrapping in wet sheets

### Cold

† **Hypothermia:** Decrease in core temperature to a level where muscular and cerebral functions are impaired.

#### Signaled by:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Memory loss
- Disorientation/slurred speech

#### Treatment:

- Move to warm location
- Add layers of clothing and body heat
- Give warm fluids and food

† **Frostbite:** Injury to body tissue caused by freezing.

#### Signaled by:

- White or gray-yellow skin area
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- Numbness

#### Treatment:

- Move to a warm location
- Immerse affected area in warm – not hot – water
- Or, warm the affected area using body heat
- Do not rub the affected area