Extreme Heat in Wisconsin

What it is and how to protect yourself and others

What is extreme heat?[2, 3, 5]

Extreme heat is either

A period of **2 - 3 days** with temperatures **above 90°F** and high humidity.

A temperature that is much hotter and/or more humid than average.

Because some places are typically hotter than others, this depends on what's considered average for a particular location at that time of year.

In Wisconsin, temperatures **above 90°F for 2 or more days** in a row are considered extreme heat.

Extreme heat basics[4, 5]

Heat wave

A long period of ***unusually hot*** weather.

Heat index

Describes how hot it feels outside when both **temperature and humidity** are considered.

Values are based on shady areas with light wind. In full sun, **it can feel up to 15°F hotter**.



Humid air makes it harder for sweat to evaporate, so the body has a harder time cooling down.

This can make the temperature feel hotter than it actually is.

Heat advisory

Possible in the next **12 hours**

Heat index expected to reach **100°F - 104°F** or Heat index expected to reach **95°F - 99°F for 4 days**

Extreme heat watch

Possible in the next **24 - 72 hours**

Extreme heat **Timing and severity are still uncertain**

Extreme heat warning

Possible in the next **12 hours**

Heat index **105°F or higher** or Heat index **75°F or higher for at least 48 hours overnight** or Heat index expected to reach **100°F - 104°F for 4 days**

Types of heat illnesses[1, 4, 5, 6]

	What is it?	Signs and symptoms	What to do
Heat stroke	***Heat stroke*** is a life-threatening emergency. It happens when the body can no longer control its temperature or cool itself. Body temperature can rise very quickly, which can lead to brain damage or death if the person is not cooled right away. Heat stroke is also known as sun stroke.	Signs may include: • very high body temperature (above 103°F) • red or hot skin • fast and strong pulse • dizziness • confusion • loss of consciousness	***Call 9-1-1 or get the person to the hospital immediately.*** If possible, move the person to a cooler area. Remove any extra clothing. Place ice packs on their head, neck, armpits, and groin.
Heat exhaustion	***Heat exhaustion*** can happen when someone exercises heavily or works in a hot, humid place. Heavy sweating causes the body to lose fluids and salt. As the body tries to cool itself, more blood flows to the skin and less blood flows to important organs. This can cause weakness, dizziness, nausea, or fainting. Without treatment, body temperature can continue to rise and heat exhaustion can turn into heat stroke.	Signs may include: • heavy sweating • paleness • muscle cramps • tiredness • weakness • fast or weak pulse • dizziness • headache • fainting • nausea • vomiting	Go to a cooler place. Cool down by removing extra clothing and taking sips of cold water. Call your healthcare provider if symptoms get worse or last more than an hour.
Heat cramps	***Muscle pains or spasms*** that can happen during heavy activity in hot weather. They are usually the least serious heat-related illness, but they are an early warning sign that the body is having trouble handling the heat.	Signs may include muscle pains or spasms in the stomach, arms, or legs.	Go to a cooler place. Cool down by removing extra clothing and taking sips of cold water. Call your healthcare provider if symptoms get worse or last more than an hour.
Heat rash	***Heat rash*** is a skin irritation that can happen when sweat gets trapped under the skin. It often looks like small red bumps or blisters and may feel itchy or prickly. Heat rash is most common in hot, humid weather.	Signs may include red clusters of small blisters that look like pimples. Blisters can also look like clear bumps. Heat rash usually forms on places of the body where there is less airflow and skin-to-skin contact. Areas include: • armpits • back • chest • elbow creases • groin • inner thighs • neck	Use baby powder to soothe the rash. Stay in a cool, dry place. Keep the rash dry.
Sunburn	***Sunburn*** is skin damage caused by too much exposure to the sun's UV rays. It can cause redness, pain, peeling, and blisters. Severe sunburn can increase the risk of other heat-related illnesses.	Signs may include painful, red, warm, or blistered skin	Do not break blisters. Stay out of the sun until the burn heals. Put cool cloths on sunburns or take cool baths. Put lotion on burned areas.

Who is most at risk?[3,4]

Adults over 65

They are less aware and less adaptable to extreme heat.

They may not know when to call for help.

Children under 5

They are sensitive to the effects of extreme heat.

They have to rely on others to keep them cool and hydrated.

People living alone

They may not know the danger or know when to call for help.

Individuals with disabilities

They may not know the danger and are less likely to call for help.

Non-English speakers

They may not have access to current information about heat advisories.

Outdoor workers

They become dehydrated more easily and are susceptible to heat illnesses.

People who are pregnant

They have to work harder to cool down both themselves and the baby.

Those who are unhoused

They may be unaware of cooling centers and may have limited access to other cooling methods.

People with chronic medical conditions

Those with chronic conditions, especially heart disease or high blood pressure, may be more sensitive to the effects of extreme heat.

How to stay safe[1, 4]

Prepare to stay cool *before* extreme heat

Do not rely on a fan as your **main** cooling device.

Find places in your community where you can go to cool down.

To search for a cooling center near you, visit **2-1-1 Wisconsin**.

Cover windows with drapes and shades to **block the sun**.

Weather-strip doors and windows to **keep heat out**.

Use window reflectors designed to **reflect heat back outside**.

Install window air conditioners and insulate around them to **cool down the living space**.

Use the United States' Environmental Protection Agency's **HeatRisk** tool to receive customized information on how to stay safe during extreme heat events.

Do you need help paying for the following?

- cooling costs
- weatherization
- energy-related home repairs

Contact the **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program** (LIHEAP) for help.

Stay cool *during* extreme heat

Take care of your body, including **drinking plenty of water** and limiting alcohol.

If air conditioning is not available in your home, **go to a cooling center**.

Never leave a child, disabled person, or pet in a locked car.

Wear **loose, lightweight, light-colored** clothing.

Use ovens less to reduce indoor heat.

If you're outside, **find shade**.

Avoid high-energy activity or outdoor work during **midday heat**.

Watch for signs of **heat illness**.

Do you have questions about extreme heat or how to stay safe during an extreme heat event?

Contact the Well Badger Resource Center

Call 1 (800) 642-7837

Text "WB" to (608) 360-9328

Email help@wellbadger.org

Complete webform

Sources:

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