

Heat Safety and Harm Reduction Guidance

Heat can be deadly, especially when combined with drug use. Stimulants like meth, cocaine, and ecstasy increase body temperature and the risk of dangerous overheating and dehydration. Overamping on meth is especially dangerous. Depressants or “downers” like fentanyl, heroin, benzos, and alcohol can mask heat stroke symptoms and reduce your awareness, so you may not realize you're overheating.

You're at increased risk of heat stroke if you:

- Use drugs, especially meth.
- Use multiple drugs at a time.
- Are living unsheltered.
- Are experiencing severe mental health symptoms.
- Have chronic health conditions like kidney or heart disease.

Dehydration can complicate your drug use and cause other problems. Dehydration can:

- Cause cracked/dry lips. Avoid sharing pipes if you have mouth sores to prevent the spread of Hep C and other illnesses.
- Make it difficult to hit a vein and make it more likely your veins will blow.

What to watch out for

- **Warning signs:** Muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea/vomiting, dry/cracked lips
- **Emergency signs:**
 - Sweating stops
 - Red, hot, dry skin
 - Fast, pounding pulse
 - Confusion, agitation
 - Unconsciousness

What you can do

1. Avoid using drugs in the heat. If you do:
 - Try to use less.
 - Use the buddy system. A friend can get help if needed.
2. Stay hydrated
 - Drink plenty of water. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. If you're sweating a lot, eat something salty or drink a sports drink. Drink extra water if you consume alcohol or caffeine.
3. Stay cool
 - Rest.
 - Avoid the sun.

- Spend time in cool places, like libraries and cooling centers that open during heat waves.
 - Wear light, loose-fitting clothes.
4. Get help
- If you have any of the **warning signs** above, it may be heat exhaustion.
 - i. Move to a cooler place
 - ii. Rest and slowly drink a cool beverage.
 - iii. Cool your body with water, ice packs, and/or a fan
 - iv. Get medical help right away if you don't feel better.
 - v. Use this guidance to help someone else experiencing heat exhaustion.
 - Heat exhaustion can quickly turn into heat stroke. **Heat stroke is a medical emergency! Call 911 right away** for these emergency signs:
 - i. Stop sweating
 - ii. Red, hot, dry skin
 - iii. Fast, pounding pulse
 - iv. Confusion, agitation
 - v. Unconsciousness

Please see Public Health's [Hot Weather Preparedness](#) page for more info on staying safe and healthy in the heat.