

Heat_Advisory

Here in the Houston Gulf Coastal area, we certainly are no strangers to rather extreme summertime conditions of high temperatures coupled with high humidity levels. Practicality dictates that we be aware of and take preparations to deal with these adverse weather conditions.

The human body has a couple of mechanisms available to deal with this high level of summer heat; sweating and evaporative cooling.

As the air becomes moist due to the onset of high relative humidity, evaporation becomes inhibited and cooling of the body becomes a problem.

When we are unable to maintain proper body temperature, symptoms of heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke manifest themselves. To quantify values to identify this problem, the term 'Heat Index' was developed. The 'Heat Index' is derived from that combination of temperature and humidity that describes "how hot it feels". The 'Heat Index' value is calculated as if you are standing in a ventilated, shady place.

Prolonged exposure to 'Heat Indices' ranging from:

80 to 90 degrees F could lead to possible fatigue.

90 to 105 degrees F represent the possibility of heat cramps and heat exhaustion occurring.

105 to 130 degrees F represent heat cramps and heat exhaustion is likely. A heat stroke is also possible.

Greater than 130 degrees F is when dangerously fatal conditions exist.

To cope with reducing potential health related problems:

If you plan to be outside, restrict strenuous physical activities to early morning or late evening hours.

Wear lightweight loose fitting and light colored clothing.

Wear a hat to shield yourself from the sun and use sunscreen to minimize the risk of sunburn.

Your body may lose as much as one gallon of water per hour through perspiration. Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages as they may increase the rate of water loss in your body increasing the risk of heat exhaustion or stroke.

Spend as much time as possible in air conditioning or under the cooling effects of a fan.

Children, the elderly and people with chronic ailments are most at risk during periods of extreme heat.

Don't forget your pets can succumb to the effects of excessive heat. Ensure that they have plenty of drinking water and a shady place to rest.

Avoid leaving pets or children in automobiles as the interior temperatures may quickly climb to the 150 degree F range.