



Tip Sheet for Patients with COPD and Asthma

Staying Safe When It's Hot Outside

First, know when being outside may put your health at risk.

To get your local forecast, use your phone's weather app or go to weather.com and type your town or zip-code in the search box at the top of the screen.



Click the app and look for a heat advisory or heat warning

You can also tune in to your local weather forecast on TV or radio and listen for an announcement of a heat advisory or extreme heat warning.

Hot days can make it harder to breathe comfortably. When it's hot outside, you may have to work harder to breathe.

If you feel hot, even if a heat advisory or warning hasn't been given, you can use these tips to stay safe:

1. **Drink to help your body handle heat.** Avoid sugary drinks, alcohol and caffeine in coffee, tea, energy drinks, and some sports drinks. Eat light, easy-to-digest foods, such as fruit or salads.

For most people, when your urine is light yellow or clear, you are well hydrated; if your urine is dark, you need to drink more. However, if you are on dialysis, or take diuretics (i.e., water pills) talk with your provider about how much water you should drink when it gets hot outside.

2. **Take your medicines as prescribed unless your provider tells you not to.** Some medicines for COPD, including Atrovent, Spiriva and other anticholinergic medicines, may make it harder for your body to cool off.

Other medicines can also affect your ability to deal with the heat. These include medicines for high blood pressure (ACE inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers/ ARBs, or beta blockers), medicines for depression and anxiety (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors/SSRIs), or antipsychotics such as quetiapine (Seroquel), risperidone (Risperdal), and olanzipine (Zyprexa) among others.

Do not keep your inhalers in cars or mailboxes when it is hot outside. Exposure to high temperatures can damage them.

- 3. Use cool water on your body: Take a cool bath or shower or dampen cloths for a sponge bath.** If you use a fan, use it only when the temperature is below 95°F and point it away from your body. Blowing hot air on your body can increase your body temperature.
- 4. Rely on the Air Quality Index.** The Air Quality Index (AQI) measures air pollution. You can find the AQI on your phone's weather app or by going to airnow.gov and typing in your zip code. Speak with your provider about what you should do when the AQI is high.

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution

Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 to 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 to 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

- 5. Do outdoor activities when temperatures are lower, usually in the morning before 11 a.m. or after 6 p.m. in the evening.** If you work outdoors, take frequent breaks to rest and rehydrate in a shaded or air-conditioned area, and discuss a heat safety plan with your employer.
- 6. Dress for success.** Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing. Wear sunscreen and a hat when you're outside.
- 7. Know where to go to stay cool.** If you do not have air conditioning at home, it is too expensive, or the temperature in your home is over 80°F, know where you will go to stay safe when it gets hot outside. This can be a neighbor or friend's home, a place of worship, a community center, or a building designated by your town or city as a cooling center.
- 8. Know the signs when your body is telling you it's too hot.**

Heat Exhaustion	OR	Heat Stroke
Faint or dizzy Excessive sweating Cool, pale, clammy skin Nausea or vomiting Muscle cramps		Headache, confusion, may lose consciousness No sweating Red, hot, dry skin Nausea or vomiting
Get to a cool air-conditioned place Drink water Take a cool shower or use cold compress		CALL 911 Move person to a cooler place Cool using cool cloths or bath If unconscious, do NOT give anything to drink