



## Stream Team Academy Fact Sheet Series

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## Outdoor Recreation in the Summer Months Heat Safety Tips

An Educational Series for Stream Teams to Learn and Collect!

*By Cathy Wood, Department of Health & Senior Services*

**M**issouri has countless outdoor areas to enjoy and explore, no matter the season. Much like all the Midwest, Missouri can experience a wide range of temperature extremes. Whether for recreational or professional reasons, if your adventures take you to the trails, streams, rivers, or parks to explore or work in during the warmer months, you need to be prepared for the higher temperatures and increased humidity. If you will be out working in the elements either sampling water, taking out invasive plant species, planting trees, or picking up litter, etc., you need to be mindful of warm weather hazards. It's important to always be weather-aware. Spending time outside is great – but when the temperature rises, so does your risk for heat illness.



**Heat-related illness can present in several ways and is not always just “being hot”. There are several types of heat-related illnesses:**

- Heat Cramps: muscle spasms from heavy sweating and loss of salt.
- Heat Exhaustion: fatigue, weakness, nausea, and dizziness
- Heat Stroke: When your body absorbs more heat than it can release, this is known as hyperthermia. Your body temperature can shoot above 104 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) as the body absorbs more heat than it can release. You stop sweating. You might become confused, pass out, or even have seizures. It happens faster than people think, especially in high heat and humidity and can be life-threatening. This is an emergency and medical attention must be sought immediately.

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**Heat illness can affect anyone, but some groups are more vulnerable. These include:**

- Older adults
- Infants and young children
- Pregnant women
- People with certain illnesses and chronic medical conditions such as: heart disease, asthma, mental illness, and obesity. Some medications can also interfere with temperature regulation. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking prescription drugs as some medications can affect the way your body reacts to heat and sunlight.
- Individuals not used to spending time in heat and humidity.

## **Know the Signs of Heat Illness**

If your body gets too hot, you can get sick. Know the symptoms of your body overheating and know when to seek medical care. If you experience any of these symptoms, STOP all activity and get to a cool place. Symptoms include:

- Muscle cramping
- Unusually heavy sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness or confusion
- Headaches
- Weakness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid Heartbeat

## **Tick Prevention**

The warm weather also means tick season in Missouri! Ticks can transmit serious illnesses. Many of these illnesses can be effectively treated if they are caught early. Remember to:

Use repellent containing DEET on exposed skin and clothing. Wear clothing treated with permethrin.

Do frequent tick checks on your body.

Shower as soon as possible upon returning inside to remove any unattached ticks.

Recognize symptoms of tickborne illnesses and when to seek care from a medical professional.

## **Enjoy the Summer, but Be Prepared, Aware, and Safe**

Don't let the high heat and humidity keep you from enjoying all that Mother Nature has to offer. When your work takes you outdoors or you just need some fresh air and exposure to natural spaces, remember to be safe, aware, and prepared for warm weather! And when out in the heat, it is always safer with a partner.

**Here's how to stay safe and beat the heat:**

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink water regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid too much caffeine or alcohol, which can dehydrate you.
- **Dress for the Weather:** Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing. Don't forget a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- **Take Breaks:** Rest often in the shade, especially during the hottest parts of the day. If possible, schedule work for early morning when the temperatures and humidity are at the lowest.
- **Work in Teams: Buddy up.** Always work with a partner when possible and watch out for one another. Watch each other for signs of heat stress, especially during long shifts.

For more information, please visit the DHSS website at: <https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/hyperthermia/>