

## Protecting Yourself from heat-related illnesses

- ◆ Use air conditioning to cool down, or find an air conditioned building
- ◆ If air conditioning is not available in the home, open windows and shades on the shady side of the home and close them on the sunny side, which may help cool temperatures inside
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks
- ◆ Take cool showers or baths to beat the heat and help keep body temperatures at safe levels
- ◆ Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day (11am - 4pm) and take regular breaks from physical activity;



- ◆ Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing
- ◆ Stay out of the sun as much as possible
- ◆ Wear sunscreen and a ventilated hat outdoors, even if it seems cloudy
- ◆ Never leave children, pets or individuals with special needs in a parked car for ANY amount of time since vehicle temperatures can rise to dangerous levels in just a few minutes; and
- ◆ Check on family, friends, and neighbors often to assess their condition, especially elderly persons and those who have special needs.

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## Climate Change and Human Health

### Adverse Health Effects of Rising Temperatures and Humidity



Kaw Nation EPA Office  
With Support From  
National Indian Health Board

## Climate Change and Rising Temperature and Humidity

High temperatures and humidity over extended periods of time can cause serious health problems. High temperature most directly affect health by compromising the body's ability to regulate its internal temperature. Loss of internal temperature control can result in a cascade of illnesses. There are three major heat-related illnesses: heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat-stroke or even skin irritation from the heat.

People most susceptible to high temperatures are the elderly, young children, people who are overweight or obese, individuals with respiratory ailments or chronic medical conditions, and people who work outdoors.



High temperature makes it difficult to run.



## Adverse Health Effects

- ◆ Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms that mostly occur in the abdomen and legs. They serve as an early sign that the body is struggling to maintain a healthy temperature because of external heat. The best way to alleviate heat cramps is to move to a cooler environment, begin drinking fluids, and gently massage the affected areas to relax stressed muscles.
- ◆ Heat exhaustion is a step up in severity from heat cramps and is characterized by headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness, and pale or cool skin. Heat exhaustion should never be ignored, and it is imperative to quickly relocate to a cool place with circulating air. Remove or loosen excess clothing, and use a damp towel to try to soothe the body. Drink small, regular amounts of water, and monitor symptoms for improvement.

- ◆ Heat stroke or Sun Stroke is the most dangerous heat-related condition, and the one requiring immediate medical attention, is heat stroke. In these cases, the body systems become completely overwhelmed with heat and begin to shut down entirely. Extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees), weak pulse, red skin, and vomiting are all signs of heat stroke, which is life-threatening. If these symptoms appear, call 9-1-1 right away, and immerse the body in cool water and/or ice.
- ◆ Heat rash or prickly heat is a skin irritation that appears as a red cluster of pimples or small blisters that is the least serious heat-related illness. A person should be moved to a cool place and the affected area should be kept dry. Talcum powder may be used to promote comfort.



Heat rash, also known as prickly heat