

Coping With Summer Heat

The heat of a Missouri summer not only can make for high utility bills, but also can be deadly. Here are some tips to help keep you comfortable, healthy and penny-wise.

Help your air conditioner help you

- Install window air conditioners snugly. Insulate spaces around air conditioners for a tighter fit.
- Plug up all cracks and spaces around room air conditioners to keep out the hot, humid air. Caulk and weatherstrip your home — heat goes where it's cooler and that's inside your house.
- If you have central air, set your thermostat no lower than 78 degrees F.
- If you want to set your thermostat above 78 degrees F, you will adjust more easily to a gradual change; move it up one degree a week until it is at 82 degrees F.
- Change or clean your air-conditioning filter once a month.

Control indoor air humidity

If your home is not air-conditioned, use moving air to beat the heat

- Open all your windows early in the morning to get rid of heat and help cool the home.
- When the temperature begins to rise, close the house. Block the sun from coming in by using awnings and solar screens. Reflect the sun away with aluminum foil or roller shades. Often you can keep this coolness until late afternoon.
- Keep the house closed during the hottest time of day. Check your indoor and outdoor thermometers to make sure that the indoor temperature is still cooler than outside. Later, open up your house so the cool nighttime air can lower inside temperatures.
- You can help the rising hot air move out of your house by opening windows on the lower floor toward the breeze and on the upper floor away from the breeze.
- Use floor and ceiling fans as much as possible to circulate a cooling breeze. Also use window fans if not using air conditioning.
- Sleep in a cooler part of the house, such as the basement. Take showers and baths early in the morning or late at night.
- Use appliances and equipment that give off heat (iron, TV sets, light bulbs, clothes dryer, hair dryer, etc.) only as needed and limit use to the early morning or at night, not during the middle of the day.
- Serve your family cool meals such as sandwiches, salads or fruit dishes. Try not to use your stove, if possible, to keep from heating up the kitchen.
- Remember not to let food sit out more than two hours; on a hot day (more than 90 degrees F) food should not go unrefrigerated for more than one hour. Also, always wash hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds before handling food.
- Drink plenty of cool fluids (but not alcohol or caffeinated liquids, which can dehydrate) to replace sweat loss. Dress comfortably in light, loose clothing and cover your head if outside.
- Avoid heat stress — slow down and keep cool.
- Keep tuned to radio and television for discomfort index warnings and keep in touch with others every day.
- If your house becomes too warm, try to be in a cooler place during the hottest part of the day – a friend's or neighbor's home, a senior center, a shopping mall, a library or even outside in the shade of a tree.

Keep your cool

- Reduce indoor moisture — dry clothes outside, cover cooking pots, take showers instead of baths.
- Use exhaust fans.
- Use a dehumidifier when needed.

Related MU Extension publications

- GH1900, Exercising in the Heat
<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH1900>

Order publications online at <http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/shop/> or call toll-free 800-292-0969.



■ Issued in furtherance of the Cooperative Extension Work Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Director, Cooperative Extension, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211
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