

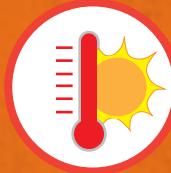
Safe Walking Tips

Summers in the Washington, DC area are notoriously hot and humid, which can make getting around on foot a bit sticky. Apart from simply causing discomfort, exposure to extreme heat also poses health risks—including dehydration and heat stroke—all of which can potentially land you in the hospital. But don't panic! You can stay safe and (reasonably) comfortable by taking a few sensible precautions.



Check Air Quality

In addition to temperature forecasts, be sure to check the air quality index at CleanAirPartners.net. Heat and humidity can cause increased ozone pollution at ground level, which can cause respiratory and other health problems, especially for children, the elderly and those with chronic illnesses.



Know the Symptoms

Be aware of the symptoms of heat-related illnesses such as confusion, anxiety, loss of consciousness or a marked decrease in sweating. Stop and seek treatment if you begin to experience any of them.



Stay Hydrated

Make sure you're well hydrated before walking by drinking 16 oz. of water. ALWAYS take water with you. As a general rule, drink 1 cup of water for every mile (15-20 minutes) or whenever you feel thirsty. Walking more than an hour? Switch to a sports drink with electrolytes to maintain the proper balance of salt in your body.



Wear Proper Clothing

Think light colors and breathable fabrics. Wicking is a good choice for longer walks, as it takes moisture away from the body. Wear a hat to provide your own shade, and avoid cotton socks which can get damp from perspiration and cause blisters. Choose shoes with breathable mesh uppers.



Use Cooling Products

A variety of products are available to keep you cool for hours at a time. Neck coolers are especially popular since the neck area plays an important role in cooling the rest of the body. You can purchase one, or find directions online by searching "homemade neck coolers."



Time your Walks

If your schedule allows, plan your walking trips for either early morning or evening to avoid both extreme heat and increased air pollution. Take frequent breaks in air-conditioned surroundings if you're walking during the hottest part of the day.



Plan your Route

Be sure to get directions to your destination to prevent unnecessary time spent in the heat in case you get lost. Try to plan a pedestrian-friendly route that includes some shade. Trees, shrubs and water all have a cooling effect, as opposed to areas that are predominantly asphalt or surrounded by heat-absorbing buildings.

