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## Our top tips for coping with hot weather and pregnancy

Being pregnant isn't easy, but it can be even more challenging in the summer. With the heat and humidity – and the swollen legs and feet – hot weather and pregnancy aren't exactly the perfect match. So what are some top tips to stay cool and comfortable when the temperature rises outside?

Many women report feeling hotter than normal when pregnant, which might be a result of their core body temperature rising slightly. So although many of us cross our fingers for sun over the summer, being pregnant in hot weather can make women feel hotter than usual and extremely uncomfortable.

### Why does pregnancy make you warmer?

In [pregnancy](#), an increased metabolism, elevated levels of hormones such as progesterone and changes to circulation can also make women feel warmer. When you are expecting, the volume of blood in the body increases by up to 50%. The blood vessels expand slightly to allow for this change and move closer to the surface of the skin, which can make pregnant women feel warmer. Mix hot weather and pregnancy hormones together and you'll know how uncomfortable this can be.

In the later stages of pregnancy, carrying around a bump can lead to an increased workload on the body as a result of the extra weight too. Hot, humid weather can also exacerbate common pregnancy issues such as exhaustion and [nausea](#), which can be very unpleasant.

"During pregnancy, changes in hormones and blood flow can cause body temperature to rise, so hot weather can be an extra challenge for mums-to-be," says Amanda Milne, a midwife for the pregnancy charity [Tommy's](#).

### Swelling in hot weather and pregnancy

Ankles, feet and fingers can swell in pregnancy, as your body retains more water than usual. It's often worse during hot weather, at the end of the day and further into your pregnancy - and can be unpleasant.

"Remember that a swollen face, wrists and ankles may be more likely on a hot day but can also be a sign of [pre-eclampsia](#) - a condition which causes high blood pressure in pregnancy and after labour - which can be serious if not treated. If these don't resolve swiftly, let your midwife know," says Elizabeth Duff, senior policy advisor at the pregnancy, birth and early parenthood charity [NCT](#).

## Is hot weather dangerous in pregnancy?

On top of this, there are the usual risks associated with higher temperatures too, such as [dehydration](#) and [heatstroke](#). "Being pregnant can make your body temperature rise so getting through a hot summer is a double whammy and can be challenging," says Duff.

"Hot weather can also lead to dehydration, fatigue, heat exhaustion, [fainting](#) or even heatstroke, so it's really important to keep cool when pregnant."

Signs of [heat exhaustion](#) include headaches, dizziness, confusion, feeling sick, excessive sweating, fast breathing, being very thirsty and a high temperature. Heat exhaustion is not usually serious if you can cool down within 30 minutes. However, [heatstroke](#) is a medical emergency and the symptoms include severe headaches, feeling or being sick, shallow and fast breathing, muscle weakness, fainting and confusion.

## How to keep cool in hot weather and pregnancy

### Stay hydrated

"It's easy to get dehydrated, especially when struggling with morning sickness, so we recommend trying to drink at least 1.5 litres of water a day," says Milne. If you feel nauseous or sick, try sipping water steadily throughout the day.

If you are pregnant in summer, make sure you're drinking plenty of water to help prevent dehydration. The UK guidelines suggest you should aim for [six to eight glasses](#) of water and other liquids each day to replace normal water loss – around 1.2 to 1.5 litres. You will need to increase the amount of water that you drink in warmer weather, as you will sweat more. Try to get into the habit of bringing a cold water bottle with you wherever you go – besides keeping you hydrated, it should cool you down too.

"Eat food with a high water content, like watermelon, to help avoid dehydration," says Duff.

### **Wear loose clothing**

To feel more [comfortable](#) when going through pregnancy in hot weather wear loose clothes made of breathable fabrics, such as cotton or linen. Loose clothes can help air circulate next to the skin, whereas tight clothes can feel constrictive and make you feel even warmer. Also be sure to wear comfortable shoes to alleviate the effects of foot swelling.

### **Splash yourself with water**

Cool baths or showers, and sponging or splashing yourself with cool water can help on hot days if you're struggling. Try taking a water spray bottle with you to cool you down if it's really hot, or resting in a room with air conditioning. If your feet are swollen from the heat, soak them in a bowl of water containing ice.

"A cool shower or bath can also be really refreshing – or better still, why not go for a swim? Low-impact exercise is safe throughout pregnancy," Milne advises. "Consider taking a small handheld fan when going out or investing in a desk fan for work or home."

### **Adjust your exercise plan**

You might need to [adjust your exercise plan](#) while pregnant in summer, particularly if it is hot outside. If your body temperature rises above 39.2°C in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, your baby has a slightly increased risk of birth defects, according to Tommy's. However, you are not likely to get this hot unless you have a fever or you exercise in a very hot and humid climate that you aren't used to.

### **Stay in the shade**

If it's hot out, take the opportunity to rest up, as pregnancy can be tiring even when it's cool. When tackling hot weather and pregnancy, put your feet up as much as possible, [avoid the sun from 11 am until 3 pm](#) and if you are out and about, wear sunscreen, sunglasses and a wide brimmed hat. If you do feel faint or unwell, try to find a cool and shady spot to sit or lie down in and drink plenty of water.

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**Last updated by:**

Lydia Smith  
06/08/2021

**Peer reviewed by:**

Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP  
06/08/2021

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