

# Healthy Indoor Environments

*Where We Live, Learn and Play*

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## Be Prepared for Emergencies and Natural Hazards

*Written by Stephanie Benton, Early County Extension Coordinator and Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent*

Natural hazards aren't something we like to think about, but no matter where you live in the United States, natural hazards occur. There are tornadoes, tropical storms, hurricanes, severe thunderstorms, flooding, snow and ice, and wildfires. For any type of natural hazard, it is important to be prepared.

Hurricane season is from June 1 through November 30. If you or your family live near the coast, it is time to get prepared. If you have an emergency supply kit, take time to assess the contents and make needed updates and additions. If you don't have an emergency kit, then take action and create one. An emergency kit will provide you with necessities to use during and following a natural hazard. Customize the list below to meet your family's needs.

- ◆ Written family communication plan that includes phone numbers, a meeting place, and a reunification plan
- ◆ Bottled water (1 gallon per day per person)
- ◆ Nonperishable food (at least a 3-day supply)
- ◆ Paper products (toilet tissue, plates, cups, *etc.*)
- ◆ Disposable eating utensils
- ◆ Can opener/scissors/knife
- ◆ Extension cord
- ◆ Portable stove or grill with charcoal and lighter fluid
- ◆ Matches or a lighter
- ◆ Clothes, shoes, rain gear
- ◆ Disposable wipes and towels
- ◆ Sanitation supplies like bleach, cleaners, garbage bags, *etc.*
- ◆ Portable radio with batteries
- ◆ Flashlight and batteries
- ◆ Cell phone and charging cable and/or car adapter
- ◆ Basic tools and a whistle
- ◆ Disposable gloves
- ◆ Fuel for vehicles
- ◆ First aid kit
- ◆ Important documents in waterproof container (*e.g.*, will, insurance policies, passports)
- ◆ Infant care supplies
- ◆ Food, water and medications for pets

For more information on creating an emergency kit visit UGA Extension [Home Emergency Checklist](#) and Weather Emergency Resources from [UGA Extension](#).

## Playing it Safe

Written by Teresa Adkins, Decatur County 4-H/Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent



(Image Source: pixabay)

Playing outdoors is beneficial in many ways. Not only does exposure to sunshine increase vitamin D levels, but it can also boost moods and give a sense of calm and focus. Physical benefits to outdoor play include improved balance and coordination, increased immunity, reduction of eyesight problems and development of muscle strength. Plus, being outside sparks curiosity, increases attention span and enriches sensory skills. With all these benefits, playing outdoors sounds like a winning summertime solution. But what about the heat?

In the south, it is not only the outside temperature that makes it hot, but it is the combination of temperature and high humidity that can cause sweltering weather. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advises extra precautions be taken when the temperature

reaches 90 degrees or above and the humidity is 70% or higher. Young children are especially vulnerable in hot weather. This doesn't mean one should avoid outdoor activities. With a little preparation and a lot of oversight, children (adults, too) can enjoy playing outside. Follow these suggestions to help beat the heat.

**TIMING.** Plan playtime during the cooler parts of the day like early morning or late afternoon. Limit outside play during the middle of the day. Always make use of shady areas for extra protection.

**CLOTHING.** One of the easiest ways to ensure safe play in hot weather is to wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing. Loose clothing helps air to circulate which keeps the body cooler.

**SUNSCREEN.** At least 30 minutes before going outside, apply UVB/UVA protection sunscreen that is at least SPF 15, and preferably higher. Reapply every several hours or follow the product instructions.

**HYDRATION.** Make sure to consume plenty of drinking water and avoid sugary and caffeinated drinks. If sweating a lot, have a sports drink or snack. High water content snacks like watermelon and other fruits are good choices.



(Image Source: pixabay)

**WATER ACTIVITIES.** Playing in water is a great way to keep cool, but there is also a risk of illness, injury or even death. Make sure pools and water playgrounds have appropriate chemical levels to prevent the spread of germs and are fenced off to prevent accidental falls. Always make sure that physically appropriate flotation devices are used when around open water activities like boating. Monitor, monitor, monitor.



(Image Source: pixabay)

**PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT.** Playgrounds are great for exploration, but hot weather can cause the equipment to become hot with potential of causing burns. Make a quick touch test to make sure the equipment is at a safe temperature.

## Plan Ahead to Keep Cool During Summer

Written by Diane Bales, Extension Human Development Specialist

Summer is a time for relaxed schedules, vacations, and time with friends and family for many of us. But it's also a time that can be dangerous if you're not prepared for the heat. Here are some ways to stay cooler this summer.

**Reduce heat in your house.** Seal ductwork and air handlers to keep air-conditioned air out of the attic. Add reflective coating on your roof and reflective film on windows to reduce heat. When you replace your roof, choose a light color that reflects more heat. When you replace your windows, choose windows with low solar heat gain.



(Image Source: pixabay)

**Have your a/c serviced.** The last thing you want is an air conditioner that quits working in the heat of the summer! Bring in a professional to check and maintain your air conditioning unit before the worst heat of summer arrives. A typical air conditioning service should include checking thermostats, checking controls, tightening electrical connections, and cleaning the coils for the evaporator and condenser. Service technicians tend to be busy in the hottest months, so plan ahead.

**Find places to keep cool.** If you don't have a/c at home, or your a/c is not cooling as effectively as you would like, look for a cooling center in your town, or spend time at the local library, movie theater, or mall during the hottest part of the day. Consider going swimming in a pool or lake to cool off.

**Use fans wisely.** Electric fans can help circulate air, but they can be dangerous if not used correctly. Position fans to draw out hot air or bring in cooler air. Never use an electric fan in a closed room. Avoid using fans when the temperature is in the mid-90s or higher, because the fans will not be effective in reducing heat-related illnesses.

**Shade and close your windows.** Use blinds, drapes, curtains, or outdoor awnings to reduce the amount of sunlight entering the house. Outdoor awnings can be especially effective in reducing indoor temperatures. If the temperature outside is hotter than the temperature indoors, keep doors and windows closed to keep your home cooler.

**React quickly to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.** Heat-related illnesses can be serious, but some are more dangerous than others. Know the signs and act quickly!

A person suffering from **heat exhaustion** may have cold, pale, clammy skin; heavy sweating; a fast, weak pulse; nausea or vomiting; muscle cramps; tiredness, weakness, or dizziness; and headache or fainting. If you notice these signs, move the person to a cool place. Loosen their clothes and put cool, wet cloths on their body. Encourage them to sip water and take a cool bath. Get help right away if the person starts throwing up, their symptoms last more than an hour, or their symptoms get worse.

**Heat stroke** is a life-threatening emergency. Signs of heat stroke include high body temperature (103°F or higher); hot, red, dry, or damp skin; a fast, strong pulse; headache and dizziness; nausea; confusion; and losing consciousness. If you suspect someone has heat stroke, act immediately. Call 911 and ask for emergency medical help. Move the person to a cooler place immediately. Find ways to help lower the person's body temperature while you wait for emergency help to arrive, such as sponging them off with cool cloths or placing them in a cool bath. Do not give the person anything to drink.

The hot summer temperatures don't have to spell disaster. With planning and preparation, you can keep your family and your home cooler and reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses.



## Playing it Safe *(continued from p. 2)*

**CREEPY CRAWLIES.** Encounters with fire ants, biting insects and snakes are normal occurrences in hot weather. Avoid play in areas where insect nests have been observed. Insect repellent helps to protect from bug bites. Visit the [EPA website](#) to select the right insect repellent. Also keep an eye out for ticks and wild animals.

**SUPERVISE.** It's a good idea to be familiar with dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke symptoms. Always have an undistracted adult nearby watching for signs of distress or other outdoor related issues.

Summertime and hot weather are synonymous in Georgia, but outdoor activities are still very possible and highly encouraged for human development. Think of all the physical, mental, emotional, and social benefits and the life-time memories created from outdoor play. It's just a matter of planning and being prepared to beat the heat and play it safe.

### Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist

~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

- **Sparkling glass dishes** can be achieved by cleaning the container with dish soap and scrubbing with a ball of aluminum foil.
- **Kitchen sponges** are full of germs and should be cleaned regularly. Microwaving it will zap 99.9% of the germs. Soap the sponge in water (1/4 cup for scrub sponges and 1/2 cup for cellulose). Heat scrub sponges in the microwave for 1 minute and cellulose sponges for 2 minutes.
- **"Top Down" cleaning** is the most effective way to clean. Start with the ceiling and walls and end at the floor.
- **To remove bad smells** from the refrigerator, place crumpled brown paper or grocery bags inside. Replace them when the paper start to smell.
- **Remove pet hair** by wiping furniture and surfaces with a damp microfiber cloth. The cloth has an electrostatic charge that attracts the hair.
- **Whiten napkins, tablecloths and white socks and t-shirts** by placing them in a pan of boiling water with slices of fresh lemons. Turn off the heat and leave them to soak for up to 1 hour then wash as usual. For extra brightening, spread them in the sunlight to dry. This works best for natural fibers like cotton.
- **To remove soap scum** from glass shower doors, apply lemon oil furniture polish with a soft cloth. The doors will continue to sparkle after several showers.



UGA Extension [Healthy Indoor Environments](http://healthyhomes.uga.edu)  
([healthyhomes.uga.edu](http://healthyhomes.uga.edu))



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