

Your AC died in a heat wave.

This is more than uncomfortable — heat can get dangerous fast, and summer repairs can take days. Here's how to keep your household cool and safe while you wait.

READ FIRST

If any of these happen, act first

! **Someone stops sweating, gets confused, or their skin turns hot and dry.**

That's heat stroke territory — call 911 now, move them somewhere cooler, and cool them with wet cloths while you wait. Per the CDC, minutes matter here.

! **A person or pet is in a parked car.**

Get them out immediately. A closed car can climb 20 degrees in 10 minutes, even with the windows cracked.

FREE, RIGHT NOW

Start with these — they cost nothing

- ☐ Close blinds on the sunny side
blocking direct sun keeps rooms noticeably cooler all day.
- ☐ Open windows after dark
let the cooler night air in, then shut everything by morning to trap it.
- ☐ Move to the lowest floor
heat rises, so the shadiest downstairs room will be the coolest spot.
- ☐ Drink before you feel thirsty
sip water through the day and skip caffeine and alcohol, which dry you out.
- ☐ Cool your body directly
a damp towel on the back of your neck and a cool shower bring your temperature down fast.

UNDER 12 HOURS

Keep the heat out, watch your people

- ☐ Close every blind and curtain on the sunny side to block radiant heat.
- ☐ Run fans to move air across skin — that helps you cool even when the air is warm.
- ☐ Get everyone sipping water before they feel thirsty; skip caffeine and alcohol.
- ☐ Move to the lowest, shadiest floor and stay still during the hottest hours.
- ☐ Watch kids, older adults, and pets for dizziness, headache, confusion, or no sweating.
- ☐ Put a cool, damp cloth on the neck, wrists, and ankles to drop body temperature.

12–48 HOURS

Find cooler air

- ☐ Spend the hottest part of the day somewhere with AC — a library, mall, theater, or cooling center.
- ☐ Check your city's website or call 211 for cooling-center locations and hours.
- ☐ Check on older neighbors and anyone living alone; offer a ride to cool air.
- ☐ Keep the fridge and freezer shut to protect food while the kitchen is hot.
- ☐ Take cool (not cold) showers a few times a day to reset your body temperature.
- ☐ Never leave a child or pet in a parked car, even for a minute — it heats to deadly fast.

48 HOURS AND BEYOND

Make safe calls

- ☐ If the house won't drop below the low 80s at night, plan to stay somewhere cooler.
- ☐ Know the signs of heat stroke — hot skin, confusion, fainting — and call 911 if you see them.
- ☐ Never use a gas grill or stove indoors to cope; it adds heat and carbon monoxide.
- ☐ If the power's out too, a power station can run a fan or small AC unit safely indoors.
- ☐ Keep hydrating and resting — recovery from heat strain takes longer than people expect.

KNOW THE LINE

When it's more than an inconvenience

- **Call 911: Confusion, slurred words, or fainting in the heat.**
- **Call 911: Hot, dry skin after sweating stops — or a body temp over 103°F.**
- **Call 911: A seizure, or someone you can't wake up.**
- **Leave: The AC is out, the inside of your home keeps climbing, and someone vulnerable lives there — head to a cooling center, a library, or a friend's place with AC. Your county posts cooling center locations on hot days.**

WORTH KNOWING

Easy mistakes to avoid

- **Trusting a fan to do an AC's job**
Once indoor temps reach the mid-90s, a fan alone can't prevent heat illness — per the CDC. It moves hot air, it doesn't remove it. Cool showers and a cooler location beat a fan on the worst days.
- **“Hydrating” with beer or iced coffee**
Alcohol and caffeine both work against you in the heat. Water and electrolytes are the job — boring, and correct.
- **Mowing the lawn at noon**
Hard outdoor work belongs in the early morning during a heat wave. The chores will wait; heat stroke doesn't.
- **Forgetting the medicine cabinet**
Some medications lose potency in the heat, and some make you more heat-sensitive — insulin is the classic one. Keep meds cool and ask your pharmacist which of yours matter.