

Beat the Heat: Tips to Keep Cool This Summer



Living in Texas, I dread the summer. Don't get me wrong. I love my hometown of Austin. But by early June when temperatures rise above 95 degrees nearly every day, the heat is so oppressive that I start fantasizing about a move to the mountains.

As many as 60-80% of people living with MS experience [heat sensitivity](#). Heat exposure saps our energy and can exacerbate symptoms. High summer temperatures can make us downright miserable.

While I do try to escape to a cooler locale at some point during the long summer months, I am still stuck in Texas much of the time. And over the years, I've learned a thing or two about beating the heat. Here are some of my favorite strategies:

1. **Explore your city/town's public pools.** Austin residents are fortunate to have over 30 city pools that usually open just after Memorial Day and stay open until school starts in mid-August. My kids have their favorites, and we try to go in the morning or the evening, since midday is often too hot and sunny even at the pool! Check out pools where you live, or you might try a natural swimming hole for a little more adventure.
2. **Exercise in the morning before it gets too hot.** Take a walk in your neighborhood and spritz yourself with water (carry a small spray bottle) if you get hot. Or find a place to swim laps or do water aerobics – wonderful exercise and you don't have to sweat!

The YMCA – which offers financial assistance if you’re low-income – has locations all over the country and most have a pool. Being inside the rest of the day won’t be so hard after you’ve had a chance to be active outdoors or in the water.

3. **Stay well hydrated.** Carry a water bottle (a Hydro Flask works well to keep water cold even in Texas). Also, get creative: make herbal iced tea, flavor water with different kinds of fruit, make smoothies with frozen fruits, or create spritzers with sparkling water and a little juice or lime. [Southern Living](#) has some non-alcoholic drink recipes to inspire you.
4. **Wear airy, light-colored clothes.** But be sure to bring a sweater for over-air-conditioned buildings.
5. **Find fun indoor activities when you have free time.** An afternoon outing to a movie, a local museum, the library, or the bowling alley can be a lot of fun when it’s too hot to spend time outside.
6. **Have a back-up plan.** If don’t have air conditioning or your unit breaks during a heatwave, have a plan to get help. Many cities will set up cooling centers when temperatures get unusually hot. Call 2-1-1 or your local news outlet to learn about locations near you. The [National Center for Healthy Housing](#) also has great information on their website.

Of course, remember all your other healthy habits, taking care to eat well, control your stress level, wear sunscreen and prioritize a good night’s sleep. Fill your shopping cart with summer produce – tomatoes, cherries, and those amazing Texas peaches! And enjoy the extra hours of daylight. Cool weather will be back before we know it.

Editor’s Note: Get more tips about [managing heat and MS on the Society website](#).