



Heat Might Affect You More On These Medications

Etoh Kinda Not A Great Idea Right Now Either. Just Sayin'

June 23, 2025 By [Mike Barr](#)

Kinda got my attention when I heard over the weekend that 700 people died in the last [Chicago heatwave](#). Maybe that's not many more than would die over five normal days in a city of that size, but they were officially judged to be heat-related. "Three times more than Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Harvey combined ([link](#))."

Still, since half of my family is in Florida these days and now we have this Heat Dome or whatever upon us. And because it seems EVERYONE I run into from my Twilo, Warsaw, Webster Hall days is on like two or three anti-psychotics, anti-depressants (DH sings to me with total sincerity about the meds "for my bipolar disease"), and because everyone in my extended family has been prescribed an endless list of BP meds, this seemed germane.

Several pills and potions can affect how well the body is able to handle heat — an issue that is "particularly important for older people" because they tend to be on more of these medications.

It's crucial to pay attention to this often-overlooked side effect during heat waves— but it's not just those stifling stretches that can be dangerous. Research shows that older patients with chronic medical conditions who take heat-sensitive medications can have medication-related problems throughout the entire summer.

We all need to be aware of what medications put older people at risk during these Heat Dome events-- and educate one another.

How do medications affect your heat tolerance?

First, it's important to understand [how your body deals with heat](#) and works to maintain that ideal internal temperature of 98.6 degrees.

To cool off, your body has several tricks. One is perspiration, or sweat. When sweat evaporates from your skin, it cools the body.

Another is when the blood vessels underneath your skin vasodilate (widen) and bring warm blood closer to your skin, allowing the skin to release heat.

Several different medications, though, can interfere with this complex thermoregulation system by limiting the body's ability to sweat or by reducing blood flow to the skin. Medications can also cause [dehydration](#), and some may make the skin more sensitive to the sun, causing a rash or [sunburn](#).

Some individuals are more susceptible to these heat-related issues than others. Risk factors include being over 65, having chronic medical conditions and being overweight. Spending time outside during the warmest part of the day — especially if you are doing yard work, physical activity or exercise — also increases your risk.

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Dave Kent, a retired librarian, had a heart attack more than a decade ago; exercise, along with cardiac medications, is part of his treatment plan. But when the forecast calls for heat, he plans his outdoor activities for the cooler times of the day to avoid medication side effects. "I think having an active lifestyle and maintaining a healthy diet are the keys to dealing with whatever Mother Nature throws at us," Kent says.

8 types of medications that don't mix with heat

Below are some examples of commonly used medications that can make it harder for your body to handle the heat.

1. Heart medications (BP meds & blood thinners)

- [Diuretics \(also called water pills\)](#): furosemide (Lasix), chlorthalidone (Hygroton), hydrochlorthiazide (Microzide, HydroDiuril)
- Beta blockers: metoprolol (Toprol, Lopressor), atenolol (Tenormin), carvedilol (Coreg), propranolol (Inderal)
- ACE Inhibitors: lisinopril (Zestril, Prinivil)

- Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs): losartan (Cozaar), valsartan (Diovan)
- Antiplatelets: clopidogrel (Plavix)

2. Antidepressants (some also rx'd for pain syndromes)

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs): citalopram (Celexa), escitalopram (Lexapro), fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline (Zoloft)
- Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs): duloxetine (Cymbalta), Venlafaxine (Effexor XR)
- Tricyclics: amitriptyline (Elavil), nortriptyline (Pamelor)

3. Antipsychotics (now routinely rx'd alongside antidepressant meds)

- Examples: risperidone (Risperdal) Quetiapine (Seroquel), Haloperidol (Haldol), Olanzapine (Zyprexa)

4. Central nervous system stimulants (also kind of ubiquitous these days since everyone thinks s/he has ADHD, but more in younger folks?)

- Examples: dextroamphetamine (Adderall), methamphetamine (Desoxyn), methylphenidate (Ritalin)

5. Anticholinergics (includes Seroquel, the anti-histamines, sea sickness meds, overactive bladder meds)

- Examples: benztropine (Cogentin), oxybutynin (Ditropan XL), tolterodine (Detrol)

In vivo, five antihistamines showed anticholinergic

activity: **cypheptadine>promethazine>desloratadine>loratadine>diphenhydramine.**

If you are taking a medication that can be problematic in the heat, it's a good idea to set aside time to discuss this with your doctor and hatch a plan for hot-weather days.

"To avoid these problems, health professionals need to be aware of what medications put older people at risk and educate them and their caregivers," says Cecilia Sorensen, M.D., director of the Global Consortium on Climate Health and Education at Columbia University.

There aren't specific protocols for prescribing medications during hot weather, explains Soko Setoguchi, M.D., professor of medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and an

expert on the health effects of medications. However, your doctor may want to lower the dose of a medication or sub in another.

5 tips for managing medications in the heat

1. Don't abruptly stop any medication. Many must be taken daily to keep the blood level high enough. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned.
2. Make sure you store medications properly. [Insulin](#), for example, can become less effective if left in the heat.
3. Stay hydrated. Clues that you might be dehydrated are loss of body weight, making less urine and producing urine that's darker than usual. Water from the tap (squeeze some lemon juice in for flavor) is a [great way to hydrate](#), but be sure to check with your doctor if you have been put on fluid restriction. Avoid alcohol, as this can make you dehydrated.
4. Keep cool. Wear light, loose-fitting clothes, pull down the shades at home, use a fan or air-conditioning, and avoid outdoor activity during the hottest times of the day.

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