

June 30, 2023

Fans in Extreme Heat FAQ

Q: What public health messaging has changed this year?

Fans create a sense of coolness when pointed directly to your body. However, they do not meaningfully lower core body temperature, especially for people that are at higher risk*. People at higher risk include older adults, people who live alone, people with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or respiratory disease, people with mental illness such as schizophrenia, depression or anxiety, people with substance use disorders, including alcohol, people with limited mobility, people who work in hot environments, people who are pregnant, infants and young children.

Fans do not directly cool the air and should not be used as the primary source of cooling for susceptible people in hot indoor environments. Fans are best used to circulate or move air, specifically to bring cold air into a warmer area where people are located.

- Avoid using fans that blow air toward your body when indoor air temperatures are 35°C or higher. Fans do not cool the air, so do not blow hot air on yourself. This can actually cause your body to get hotter.
- When outdoor air temperatures are cooler than indoor air temperatures, use fans in windows to blow cooler air from outside into a room.
- Do not use a fan to bring outdoor air inside when outdoor temperatures are similar or higher than indoor temperature.

*See [VCH](#) or [FHA](#) Heat Safety pages for more information on heat illness and risk factors.

Q: In what circumstances is using a fan appropriate?

Fans feel nice in hot weather, and they can help a little with cooling for younger people and at lower ambient temperatures. However, fans should **not** be used as the primary source of cooling for susceptible people in hot indoor environments over 35°C, because they cannot lower core body temperatures. People at higher risk should be in spaces with cool, safe indoor temperatures. One of the best use of fans is to move cooler air to where people are, for example to bring cool air inside when it is cooler outside or move air from a cooler room to a warmer one.

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Q: Can I use a bathroom or kitchen fan to cool my home?

Bathroom and kitchen fans are usually exhaust fans, which move air to the outside. Exhaust fans can be used to help cool your home when it is cooler outside than inside, overnight or in the early morning.

Open the windows in your home during cool outdoor periods and use the exhaust fans to push warmer air to the outside, while also pulling cooler air in through the windows.

Q: Are ceiling fans appropriate for cooling or not recommended?

These may be useful for comfort when the air is cooler than your skin, but are not advised when the temperature is above 35°C. As with other fans, ceiling fans do not provide any cooling of the air and should not be used as the primary source of cooling for susceptible people in hot indoor environments.

Q: Can I use ice bottles or ice cubes in front of a fan to help with cooling?

This may feel nice, but cannot help with core temperature cooling for susceptible people in hot indoor environments. Similarly, it does not cool the air in a room. While feeling more comfortable is important, it is equally important that the limitations of fans be clearly understood. People at higher risk should be in environments with cool, safe indoor temperatures.

Q: Can I use misting fans on my body?

Spraying cool water on your skin, wearing damp clothing, and taking cool showers or baths are all useful ways to cool down during hot weather. Standing in front of a fan with damp skin or wearing damp clothing can feel very nice. However, combining misting with fans cannot meaningfully reduce core temperature for susceptible people in hot indoor environments, and it should not be used as the primary source of cooling. Susceptible people should be in environments with cool, safe indoor temperatures.

Q: Are misting tents recommended?

Misting tents can likely make people a little more comfortable on a hot day, but it is not clear how effective they are for susceptible individuals. Environments with safe indoor air temperatures are the safest option for people at higher risk.

If someone comes into a misting tent with severe heat illness, they should be referred to prompt medical attention.

