

## ASK THE DOCTOR



R.S. writes from Geula: "I'm taking my family up North for Bein Hazmanim and would like to know how to make sure that no one suffers from dehydration. Do you have any recommendations?"

Dehydration occurs when the body loses more water from sweating than it gains from drinking. Other dangers posed by the Israeli summer weather include heat stroke (overheating), sunburn, cramps, and exhaustion. Every year these conditions lead to a number of deaths in Israel.

The North of Israel is divided into two climate areas. The first area includes the Jordan valley, the Kinneret, Tiberius, the southern face of the Golan Heights, and the Galilee Pan Handle of the Hula Valley up to Kiryat Shmona. The second climate area is basically everywhere else.

The first area is hotter and more humid than the second, making the heat there much more intense. Humidity prevents the evaporation of sweat (which cools the body). Use caution before planning trips and outdoor activities, especially in the first area. Listen to the weather updates on the radio after the hourly news, and avoid areas where there is "*omess chom kaved*" (severe heat intensity)."

If possible, wear a single layer of loose-fitting, light-colored, thin cotton clothing. The body should be covered up as much as possible. Exposed skin should be generously covered in sunscreen. A wide-brimmed hat should be worn with a cloth attachment covering the back of the neck. Sunglasses are advised.

Drink PLENTY of fluids. I advise drinking cool,

non-alcoholic drinks, avoiding freezing-cold drinks (which might cause stomach cramps), and avoiding heavily sugared drinks which tend to dehydrate you. Drink as much as possible and don't wait until you're thirsty before starting to drink.

Infants, young children, and the over-65's need to take extra care since their bodies are less able to cope with the heat. Planning a family trip should include rest stops in air-conditioned malls. Small children who refuse to drink should be offered popsicles (*artik*) to enable them to take in fluid. Do not leave a child alone in a car, not even for "two minutes," since that's all it takes for the temperature inside to rise to a dangerous level.

If you are not used to regular physical activity in the heat, now is not the time to plan a strenuous trip (*tiyul*). If you do hike outdoors, make sure you have planned for precautions at all stages of your route in the event that you or a member of your party feels weak, unwell, or suddenly faints. Think: Will you be in cellphone reception area? Will you be near other people? Will you be near to transport (public or your own)? Try to avoid outdoor activities during the middle of the day (12 noon to 2 pm) when the sun is hottest.

Keep in mind this simple-to-follow advice, and have an enjoyable and memorable trip this summer.

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