



ecology center

# Cooling Strategies for a Warming Climate



Climate change is causing longer, more frequent spells of extreme heat across California, including in the inner Bay Area. As temperatures rise, finding ways to keep cool is necessary for our health and comfort. Extreme heat puts us in danger of dehydration, heat stroke, and other heat-related illnesses. Poor air quality on hot days can make asthma, respiratory diseases, and immunodeficiency-related illnesses worse. Extreme heat endangers people on medications that react to heat, like psychotropic medications for Parkinson's disease and depression.

*You can cool down on a tight budget.* Below are low-cost, do-it-yourself alternatives to installing expensive, energy-intensive air-conditioning systems. Higher investment strategies can be found on the back of this fact sheet.

## Lowest Cost Strategies:

- **Drink plenty of water.** Staying hydrated helps you regulate your body temperature. The CDC says drink 24-32 oz. water per hour. \*1
- **Cool the skin** with a wet bandana or washcloth around your neck and on other exposed skin. Resting with damp skin allows for evaporative cooling which is essential to cooling the body and regulating temperature. For longer lasting cooling, purchase an "evaporative cooling" bandana (\$4+) which stays wet for hours. Wear loose fitting, light colored clothing.
- **Blow a fan across a cooler** stocked with ice. Aim it towards you in your living or bedroom while you sleep. Use the melted ice to dampen your bandana or water your plants. Similarly, you can situate a fan to blow air across frozen water bottles.
- **Use windows and curtains to control air flow.** Monitor the temperature both inside and out with an indoor/outdoor thermometer. When it is hotter outside, close up windows, doors, and curtains to keep the cool inside. When it cools down outside, open windows and doors to ventilate the day's hot air.
- **Create a cross breeze** in your home/apartment by having a door or window open on one side of a room and another one open on the opposite side.
- **Take cool baths or showers.**
- **Position a box fan in a window at night** to move hot air out of one room and allow cool air inside. Purchase window locks (\$3+) if you're concerned about leaving windows open.
- **Dampen your bed sheets**, and place a fan at the bottom of your bed so it cools you throughout the night. Or slightly dampen your sheets by putting an iced water bottle in your bed, wrapped in a thin towel. Cotton sheets are best.
- **Hang a thin wet sheet** over a door frame or window (using a curtain rod or thumbtacks) so the air blowing inside a room is cooled, using a fan.
- **Turn on built-in exhaust fans**, e.g. in the bathroom and kitchen, when indoor air is hotter than outside air.
- **Visit a cooling center** which has consistent air conditioning and access to water for everyone. These include libraries, community or senior centers, and shopping centers. Visit <https://veoci.com/v/p/dashboard/ewxv8granu> to find cooling centers in Alameda County.
- **Use LED lights** instead of incandescent or CFL bulbs, because LEDs produce much less heat. All energy-consuming appliances and devices produce heat, so shut down unnecessary appliances, like TVs or toasters. Turn off any unessential, heat producing, gas pilot lights.

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fact sheet

