

**A Volunteer's Perspective:
How I Personally Avoid Heat Exhaustion
By Melinda Rogers, LD18**

1. **Stay Hydrated:** I make sure to drink plenty of water before, during, and after my volunteering. I avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol because they can dehydrate me. I carry a 1-liter thermos filled with ice water (sometimes flavored) and I also carry electrolyte solutions in the form of powdered packets, gel packs or capsules.
2. **Wear Protective Clothing:** I choose lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing. Moisture wicking materials are helpful. I always wear a wide-brimmed hat and UV-protective sunglasses to shield myself from the sun.
3. **Use Sunscreen:** I apply a broad-spectrum waterproof sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. I re-apply it every two hours, or more often if I'm sweating a lot or getting wet.
4. **Cool down:** I keep a small spray bottle and cool my skin and clothing down by misting. Misting fans are helpful. I also dunk my head in water where sink is available and throw my wide brimmed hat over my cooled down head. I also would try a cooling vest or iced neck wrap.
5. **Schedule Wisely:** I volunteer during the cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or late evening, to avoid the harsh midday sun. I may have an umbrella with me to ensure shade.
6. **Take Regular Breaks:** I take regular breaks to rest in the shade or cool down indoors. I listen to my body and take it easy when I start feeling too hot.
7. **Eat Lightly:** Small, light meals are best. I carry protein bars and fruit.
8. **Stay Informed:** I watch the weather forecast and stay aware of any heat advisories. This helps me adjust my plans to avoid the hottest parts of the day.
9. **Utilize the Buddy System:** If I'm feeling unwell, a buddy can get me water or call an emergency number for me.
10. **Acclimatization:** I gradually increase my exposure to heat over a couple of weeks at the end of April to adapt to high temperatures.