

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

Penn State
Extension Home Economist
For Lehigh County



Tricks to Staying Cool

When it's mid-90's, hazy, hot and humid, the only word on my mind is COOL. Staying cool literally and figuratively. It can be a challenge. This past week as the sweat trickled down your back, you may have lost your cool. The grass is growing but it's too hot to be outside. The house is messy, but it's just too hot to stay inside

and clean. Maybe, just maybe, that driver in the grocery store parking lot or that whiny child may have pushed you one inch beyond your limit, and you lost it.

Don't touch me! Don't talk to me! Is that how you feel when the mercury climbs? Well next week is a new week. You can try again to stay cool. Here are some chilling ideas:

✓ Complete physical tasks during the early morning or late evening hours. Save sedentary activities for the hottest parts of the day.

✓ If your home cools down overnight, consider CLOSING windows and allow your insulation to keep the cool inside. Also, draw drapes or blinds in rooms where the sun shines for extended periods of time.

✓ Regularly drink water and other cool beverages. Add a squirt of lemon juice and a splash of seltzer to spruce up an otherwise boring drink.

✓ Pause at the bathroom sink. Wash your face slowly with a soft cool cloth. Get out of the plush cloths that you usually save for company. Treat yourself. Also apply cold cloths to the insides of your wrists to help your body to cool.

✓ Store your cologne or aftershave in the refrigerator (carefully marked or stashed so young children won't discover them). A splash of this cooled fragrance will be especially refreshing on a steamy day.

✓ Take the kids outside to a shady area of your yard. Gather all the dirty toys, doll clothes and lawn furniture. Make a cooling game of hand washing and scrubbing the items in basins of cool, detergent water.

✓ Spend the day in your bathing suit. Try out the sprinkler or soaker hose. For older children, invite play with squirt guns, meat basters, dish detergent bottles, sponges.

Roll out a plastic sheet or tarp on a gently sloping part of your yard. Turn a host on so water runs down the tarp. Take turns sliding down your home made water slide. Make sure the area is soft and grassy. Don't allow the tarp to remain in the area long-term or it will kill the grass underneath.

✓ Stay inside. Turn off all the lights and TV. Lie quietly on the floor and listen for unusual sounds. While lying there, tell stories to children or take turns adding to each others stories. For your own sanity, you may want to set some ground rules like "We are going to lie down and listen for ten minutes" or "While we are lying down, you cannot touch anyone else."

✓ Make sidewalk chalk drawings and then enjoy rinsing off the artwork. Get your feet and legs really wet in the process.

✓ Freeze chunks of watermelon, grapes, berries, or pineapple. Enjoy them as a cold frozen treat. Young children should not be given pieces of fruit that they could choke on. Make sure their

pieces are big enough to suck on and too big to swallow accidentally.

✓ And when things are getting really tense, walk to another room and stand in front of a fan or stand on a shaded porch to regain your composure. Lose yourself in the sound and breeze that a ceiling fan offers.

✓ When all else fails, invite yourself to someone else's air-conditioned home, visit an air-conditioned store or make a trip to the pool for relief.

If you're one of the lucky ones reading this column from a wonderfully cool living room, enjoy that luxury. Weren't we all wishing for summer back in February? Well it's here. Stay cool.

Rebecca Escott is a Home Economist with Penn State Cooperative Extension in Lehigh County. Cooperative Extension provides practical information designed to improve the quality of life for local residents. We work in partnership with Penn State and county government.

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