

How to keep cool this summer

Lea Jacobs • Jan 7, 2016



Cool down your home and yourself, with these useful tips.

Although we are renowned as being a nation of sun lovers, very few of us are enjoying the various heatwaves that are plaguing the country at the moment. It's always hot at this time of the year and although we may moan and groan about the temperature, we live with it. However, the weather phenomenon, El Niño has changed all of this and we are now experiencing temperatures that are breaking all sorts of records.

Keeping cool has become a national pastime and although many have swimming pools in which to cool off and live in air conditioned luxury, huge numbers of people do not enjoy these privileges and they are suffering.

There are ways to cool things down and make life more bearable, particularly in the home. Here are some tips to help take the sting out of the scorching days and nights.

- Keep the sunshine out by closing curtains and blinds during the day.
- Invest in a fan and stand it in front of a window in order to push the hot air out. Adjust your ceiling fans to run counterclockwise. This will draw the hot air upwards instead of merely circulating heated air.
- You can cool things down even further by filling a shallow dish such as a roasting pan, with ice and placing it in front of a fan. The breeze will take the cold water from the surface of the ice and transform it into a cool mist.
- Hang wet sheets in front of an open window. This will cool down any hot air blowing through and will lower the temperature of the room.
- Turn off the lights and light a candle - light bulbs, regardless of how low the wattage, give off heat. Why not watch TV, enjoy a meal or simply relax by candlelight.

Regardless of how much cooler you are able to make your home, you're still going to feel the heat if you don't lower your core temperature. Keeping yourself cool is a relatively easy exercise and something that doesn't have to cost a fortune.

- Anyone who has ever sat with their feet in a swimming pool will know first hand how this helps cool hot bodies down. If you're nowhere near a pool, soak your feet in a bucket of cold water whenever the heat becomes unbearable.
- Place an ice pack or a cool, damp facecloth on your wrists, your neck, elbows, ankles and behind your knees. Cooling down the various pulse points on the body will help tremendously.
- Don't eat heavy foods such as stews and casseroles during the summer months. Eating a heavy meal will make you feel hotter. Turning on the stove or oven is also going to heat things to an unbearable temperature in the kitchen. Avoid cooking inside as much as possible by braaiing and eating salads.

Although things tend to cool down a little in the evenings, hot weather affects our ability to nod off. Here are some tips for making life a little more bearable during those hot, balmy nights of summer.

- Take a cold shower before turning in for the night.
- Only use cotton sheets and duvet covers during the summer months. Other fabrics such as nylon and satin don't breathe and will make your nights uncomfortably warm.
- The wrong sort of pillow can make you sweat. Consider investing in a buckwheat pillow – they allow air to circulate while you sleep and are much cooler to sleep on than their cotton or feather counterparts. Another nifty idea is to fill a sock with rice, place it in the freezer for an hour and place around your neck.
- Place your sheets in a plastic bag and place in the freezer for half an hour or so before going to bed. While the effects of the cold will be fairly short lived, it should give you some respite from the heat allowing you to nod off in relative comfort.
- Fill a hot water bottle and freeze, in order to create a sort of waterproof ice brick.
- Alternatively you could dampen your sheets before turning in, although it's important to remember to place a towel under the sheet to avoid soaking the mattress in the process.
- Wear loose fitting cotton night clothes to bed.