

Staying Cool in Summer When the Power is Out

Choose cotton

Save the ooh-la-la satin, silk, or polyester sheets for cooler nights. Light-colored bed linens made of lightweight cotton (Egyptian or otherwise) are breathable and excellent for promoting ventilation and airflow in the bedroom.

Feel the freezer burn

Stick sheets in the fridge or freezer for a few minutes before bed. We recommend placing them in a plastic bag first. Granted, this won't keep you cool all night, but it will provide a brief respite from heat and humidity.

Get cold comfort

Here's a four-seasons tip for keeping utilities charges down: Buy a hot water bottle. In winter, fill it with boiling water for toasty toes without cranking the thermostat. During summer, stick it in the freezer to create a bed-friendly ice pack.

Be creative

If you thought fans are just for blowing hot air around, think again! Point box fans out the windows so they push hot air out and adjust ceiling fan settings, so the blades run counter-clockwise, pulling hot air up and out instead of just twirling it around the room.

Sleep like an Egyptian

If there seem to be a lot of Egyptian references in this list, it's because those Nile-dwellers knew how to do it right. The so-called "Egyptian method" involves dampening a sheet or towel in cool water and using it as a blanket. We recommend laying the damp sheets on top of a dry towel to avoid soaking the mattress.

Get loose

Less is definitely more when it comes to summertime jammies. Pick a loose, soft cotton shirt and shorts or underwear. Going full nudie during a heat wave is (unsurprisingly) controversial. Some people believe it helps keep them cool, while others claim going au natural means sweat stays on the body instead of being wicked away by fabric. We're going to chalk this one up to personal preference.

Go old-school

Remember when refrigerators were iceboxes that contained actual blocks of ice? Us neither. This stay-cool trick is straight out of the icebox era, though. Make a DIY air conditioner by positioning a shallow pan or bowl (a roasting pan works nicely) full of ice in front of a fan. The breeze will pick up cold water from the ice's surface as it melts, creating a cooling mist.

Create a cross-breeze

In this case, hanging out in the cross-hairs is a good idea. Position a fan across from a window, so the wind from outside and the fan combine in a cooling cross-breeze. Feeling fancy? Go buck-wild and set up multiple fans throughout the room to make the airflow even more boisterous.

Pamper your pulses

Need to cool down, stat? To chill out super-fast, apply ice packs or cold compresses to pulse points at the wrists, neck, elbows, groin, ankles, and behind the knees.

Be a lone wolf

Sorry lovebugs but sleeping alone is way better than spooning for staying cool. Cuddling with a partner increases body heat, making the bed a sticky, sweaty pit of despair instead of a cool, calm oasis.

Release your inner Tarzan

Feeling ambitious (or just really, really hot)? Rig up a hammock or set up a simple cot. Both types of beds are suspended on all sides, which increases airflow.

Fill up the tank

Get a leg up on hydration by drinking a glass of water before bed. Tossing and turning and sweating at night can result in dehydration, so get some H₂O in the tank beforehand. (Pro tip: Just eight ounces will do the trick, unless you're really into those 3 a.m. bathroom runs.)

Cool off

A cold shower takes on a whole new meaning come summertime. Rinsing off under a stream of tepid H₂O brings down the core body temperature and rinses off sweat (ick) so you can hit the hay feeling cool and clean.

Get low

Hot air rises, so set up your bed, hammock, or cot as close to the ground as possible to beat the heat. In a one-story home, that means hauling the mattress down from a sleeping loft or high bed and putting it on the floor. If you live in a multi-floor house or apartment, sleep on the ground floor or in the basement instead of an upper story.

Turn off the lights

This tip is pretty self-explanatory. Light bulbs (even environmentally-friendly LED's) give off heat. Fortunately, summer means it stays light until eight or nine at night. Take advantage of natural light as much as possible, and keep rooms cool after dark by using lights minimally or not at all (romantic candle-lit dinner, anyone?).

Hang out

Cool down a whole room by hanging a wet sheet in front of an open window. The breeze blowing in will quickly bring down the room's temperature.

Stay away from the stove

Summer is not the time to whip up a piping hot casserole or roast chicken. Instead, chow down on cool, room-temperature dishes (salads are clutch) to avoid generating any more heat in the house. If hot food is in order, fire up the grill instead of turning on the oven. And swap big meals for smaller, lighter

dinners that are easier to metabolize. The body produces more heat after you chow down on a huge steak than a platter of fruits, veggies, and legumes.

Encourage cold feet

Cool down the whole body by dunking (clean!) feet in cold water before hitting the hay. Better yet, keep a bucket of water near the bed and dip feet whenever you're feeling hot throughout the night.

Unplug at night

As in, literally disconnect electronics. Gadgets and other small appliances give off heat, even when turned off. Reduce total heat in the house (and save energy!) by keeping plugs out of sockets when the appliances are not in use.

Camp at home

Got access to a safe outdoor space like a roof, courtyard, or backyard? Practice those camping skills (and stay cooler) by pitching a tent and sleeping al fresco.

Hog the bed

Sleeping alone (see No. 11 above) has its perks, including plenty of space to stretch out. Snoozing in spread eagle position (i.e. with arms and legs not touching each other) is best for reducing body heat and letting air circulate around the body. Hit the hay in this sleep position to keep limbs from getting crazy sweaty.

Go rustic

When temperatures soar, trade in that extra-comfy mattress for a minimalist straw or bamboo mat. These all-natural sleeping surfaces are less comfortable, but they don't retain heat like a puffy, cloth-covered mattress.

Get creative with grains

Rice and buckwheat aren't just for eating! These cupboard staples can also keep you cool on hot nights. Stock up on buckwheat pillows, which don't absorb heat like cotton and down. And for a cold compress on really hot nights, fill a sock with rice, tie it off, and stick it in the freezer for an hour or so. The compress will stay chilly for up to 30 minutes.