

Rider Tip 6

Riding In the Heat

How hot is too hot?

At some point, you have to ask yourself if it is simply too hot to ride your motorcycle. It is an entirely personal question to which the answer is sometimes, *yes*. Sometimes it is simply too hot to ride.

If you decide to brave the heat *Watch very carefully for signs of Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke.*

Your body will send you signals that it's having trouble with the heat, which can include increased thirst, dry mouth and swollen tongue, weakness, cramps, nausea, headaches, extreme fatigue, confusion, sluggishness or even fainting, flushed or pale skin, dizziness, and heavy sweating or the inability to sweat. Decreased urine output: Urine color may indicate dehydration. If urine is concentrated and deeply yellow or amber, you may be dehydrated.

Hydrate, hydrate and then hydrate some more. Skip the caffeine, soda and alcohol. Go for water or a sports drink.

A good option to keep your fluids at a healthy level is to ride with a [Camelback](#) and sip as you go. It's important that you try to stave off any of the symptoms of dehydration before they occur.

Left unchecked, you can develop Heat Exhaustion, which is a form of mild shock. If you're feeling these symptoms, it's time to pull over, rehydrate, rest and recover for as long as it takes. Don't be in a rush to get back on the bike – sometimes a rider doesn't want to inconvenience their friends by holding things up. How long do you think a trip to the hospital will hold up the ride?

If Heat Exhaustion is allowed to develop into Heat Stroke, you're in big trouble. Your cooling system shuts down, and body temperature can rise to as high as 105 degrees. Brain damage is possible and at the very least, you'll likely have an erratic pulse and trouble breathing. People with Heat Stroke often pass out – not something you want to happen when you're riding.

Bring more water than you think you'll need. Water is vital for keeping the body cool, but it also is necessary for digestion, for flushing toxins out of your body, and for lubricating your joints. It also cushions your organs and tissues, so when you get dehydrated, your body just won't work properly, things will start to shut down, and you'll physically crash. The worst thing is that by the time you start feeling bad, you're already in trouble, so it's HUGELY important to stay hydrated. That means drinking plenty of water before you get on the bike, and consuming 1 liter of water every hour, especially in extreme temperatures. We try to get water that includes electrolytes (like SmartWater) to help replenish vital minerals that are lost when you sweat profusely.

Include stops on your route where you can cool off. One of the best ways to rejuvenate yourself is by getting out of the heat, into a cooler environment. You meet interesting people in rural convenience stores, and many have large ice freezers outside. We place our helmets in the freezers while we go inside for a cool drink. A quick stop can enable you to ride another 45 minutes even in the worst heat, so plan your ride along roads that have services and conveniences no more than 1/2 hour apart. If it's in the 100's and you've got a two hour ride before your next stop, you're putting yourself through unnecessary misery and risk.

Dress properly and keep your skin covered. Seems like simple, advice, but it's amazing how many people don't follow it. Any areas of skin that are exposed will be much harder to cool, as the sweat will evaporate from the air rushing over it at speed. This means you'll dehydrate faster. Of course, on a motorcycle you need to wear abrasion and impact resistant gear, which can be heavy. In my experience, the people who are effected most by the heat are those who don't cover themselves properly.

Wear a cooling vest. When temperatures rise over 90 degrees, a cooling vest is worth its weight in gold. Basically, it's a vest that is filled with tiny beads that retain water. Soak the vest, shake off extra water and put it on under your riding jacket. The moisture forms a cooling layer next to your skin, and you feel much more comfortable. Cooling vests are as cheap as \$30 and run up to \$100. The more expensive vests are better quality garments, and usually don't bloat up as much with the retained water. Wear a wet bandana around your neck. There is also the option of using a cooling vest or the old-fashioned soaked t-shirt method however cotton doesn't retain the water and it evaporates quickly.

Additionally, it is important to note that if the air temperature is below your regular body temperature, keep the vents open on your gear or opt for mesh garments. Once the temperature rises above your body temperature, close up vents to fight against the hot air. The moving hot air will heat up your cooler skin.

Use your Head

If you decide to ride in the high heat, listen to your body. If you feel a little woozy or maybe just a little “off”, do yourself a favor and pull off somewhere. Try to cool down by getting off the hot motorcycle and finding a shady spot, an air conditioned store or gas station and just chill out. By the time you feel the symptoms, dehydration could already be settling in.