

Extreme Heat Information Sheet

Seniors

Older adults may be faced with other factors that can put them at increased risk during extreme heat events. These factors may include chronic illnesses, medications that interfere with the body's cooling mechanisms, social isolation and poverty. Heat can aggravate existing medical conditions and have serious health effects such as **heat exhaustion** or more serious **heatstroke**. It is important to **stay cool, stay hydrated and be informed**. There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself, your family, friends and neighbours.



Watch for signs of heat illness

Heat exhaustion

- Headache
- Skin rash
- Rapid breathing and heart rate
- Muscle cramps
- Extreme thirst
- Dizziness or fainting
- Dark urine and decreased urination
- Nausea or vomiting
- Heavy sweating

What you should do

- Move to a cool place out of the sun
- Lay person down and apply cool wet cloths
- Give sips of water
- Consult with a medical expert

Heatstroke is a medical emergency - Call 911 immediately

- High body temperature
- Lack of sweat, very hot red skin
- Strong, rapid pulse
- Dizziness, fainting or unconsciousness
- Confusion and lack of coordination
- Nausea

What you should do

- Move to a cool place out of the sun
- Remove outer clothing and shoes
- Wrap in a wet towel or cloth
- Do not give fluids

Take Action - Heat illnesses are preventable!

Stay cool

- Avoid direct sun, use shady spaces, or go inside.
- Wear broad spectrum sunscreen (SPF30 or more).
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, clothing that covers the skin, sunglasses and a hat.
- Postpone outdoor activities to a cooler time of day or reschedule to another day.
- Keep blinds, curtains and doors closed during the day.
- Ensure any air conditioners are in working order. If feasible, install a window air conditioner in at least one room.
- Ensure any fans are in working order. Fans can help move cooler air indoors during the late evening and early morning hours, but should not be relied upon as a primary cooling method when indoor temperatures are above 35 degrees Celsius.
- Avoid using your oven to prepare meals.
- If safe, open doors and window at night.
- Take cool showers or baths or take a swim to cool off.
- Visit air-conditioned spaces (mall, library, recreational centre, cooling centres).
- Never leave a person or pet in a closed vehicle or in direct sun.

Stay hydrated

- Drink plenty of water before you feel thirsty. Be aware that sugary, caffeinated or alcoholic drinks cause dehydration.
- Eat hydrating foods such as fruits and fresh vegetables.

Be informed

- Know the signs of [extreme heat illness and what to do](#).
- Stay up to date on heat alerts so you know when to take extra care.
- Consider buying an additional thermometer to monitor the temperature in your most frequently used space(s) if different from the room where your thermostat is located.
- Have a plan and review actions before a heat event.
- Check on family, friends and neighbours who may be at risk.

Be prepared before an extreme heat event

- Prepare a personal health plan/family plan for extreme heat events.
- Be aware of community options and needs and prepare a list of contact numbers or web links where you can get help.
- Consider having a 'Heat Buddy' to check in on you at least twice per day if you live alone. If you know someone who lives alone, consider checking in on them as their 'Heat Buddy!'
- Be aware of the signs of heat illness and know what to do.
- Certain medications may have possible heat interactions or increase sun sensitivity. Talk to a pharmacist and follow their advice.
- Subscribe to public heat alert, weather alert and air quality alert systems.
- Keep fans and air conditioners available and in working order.
- Be well stocked to avoid having to go shopping during an event (e.g. cool drinks, food and medications).
- Install and close curtains or blinds, or awnings in windows.
- Identify or create a shaded outdoor areas (natural and artificial).

Additional actions during an event

- Limit time outdoors between 11 am and 4 pm when temperatures and UV radiation are most intense.
- Schedule outdoor activities for cooler times of the day, or reschedule for another day.
- Advise those living independently that electric fans should be used with caution. In extreme temperatures, fans lose their effectiveness.
- Ensure you stay cool and well hydrated.
- If you don't have an air conditioner, know of local areas nearby where you can cool off for a few hours on very hot days (e.g. shopping malls, libraries, places of worship, senior centers), and have a plan to get there.
- Pay attention to how you and those around you feel. Take immediate action if exhibiting signs or symptoms of heat illness.
- Monitor room temperatures throughout your residence with a thermostat. Move to cooler areas as needed.
- Consider cooling options (cool baths/showers, sponging, misting, soaking hands/feet in cool water or use wet towels).
- Turn off lights and electrical equipment that is not in use.
- Prepare meals that do not need an oven and eat hydrating foods such as fruits and vegetables.

Additional actions after an event

- Continue to monitor indoor air temperatures, and for signs of heat illness after the event has passed.
- Be aware that heat health effects may onset a few days after the event has passed. Keep an eye on those who may be more vulnerable.

Know where to find more information:

Visit www.alberta.ca/ExtremeHeat for more information and resources to help you stay safe.

Subscribe to ECCC [WeatherCan App](#) (for heat and air quality)

ECCC [Public Alerts website](#) for a list of current alerts and heat warning thresholds for Alberta.

Contact information

Questions regarding this factsheet can be addressed to: Extreme.Heat@gov.ab.ca

Out of date