

Extreme Heat Information Sheet

General Public

Extreme heat events can aggravate existing medical conditions and lead to 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

Who is at risk from heat?

Everyone is at risk from heat related illnesses when it is hot out. Certain individuals have a higher risk of developing heat-related illnesses due to factors such as age, medical conditions, social factors, or working conditions:

- Older adults (60+)
- People who are pregnant
- People who live alone or are socially isolated
- Infants and young children
- People who are experiencing unstable housing
- People with limited mobility
- People with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or respiratory illness
- People who use substances
- People who work outdoors or in hot environments
- People with mental illness such as schizophrenia, depression, or anxiety
- Some medications also increase your risk. Ask a pharmacist whether your medications impact your ability to cope with heat and follow their recommendations.

When do heat related illnesses usually happen?

- Some people are more sensitive to the effects of heat than others. However, for most people, heat-related illnesses happen when temperatures remain high for a few days, especially when nighttime temperatures do not drop.
- Know your daytime and nighttime temperatures by checking your local weather forecasts and by using a thermostat in your home.

What should you do? Be prepared

- Be aware of community options, and your needs. Prepare a list of contact numbers or web links where you can get help.
- Know if your family, friends and neighbours are at risk and may need assistance.
- 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!'
- Check regularly on children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities and chronic illness; be sure they are cool and well hydrated.
- Be well stocked to avoid having to go shopping during an event (cool drinks, food and medications).
- Top up vehicle fuel tank in case you need to relocate to somewhere cool.

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.
- Review actions before a heat event and have a plan.
- Check on family, friends and neighbours who may be at risk.

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