

Extreme Heat Preparedness

Before the heat

Heat illnesses are preventable. Extreme heat events can aggravate existing medical conditions and lead to serious health effects such as **heat exhaustion** or more serious **heatstroke**. Heat-related illnesses can happen when temperatures are higher for a number of days, particularly when the nighttime temperatures do not drop. There are **simple steps** you can take before a heat event occurs to protect yourself, your family and your neighbours.



Who is at risk from heat?

Certain individuals have a higher risk of developing heat-related illnesses; this is 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 experience 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 risks. Ask a pharmacist whether your medications will impact your ability to cope with heat and follow their recommendations.

Be prepared

- Prepare a personal health plan/family plan for extreme heat events.
- Consult with your doctor for additional health advice based on your medical status (e.g., modifications to activities, medication or fluid intake).
- Know temperatures indoors and outdoors - by checking local weather forecasts and the thermostat inside your home.
- 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 well stocked with supplies 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 a cooler place.
- Make sure air-conditioners or fans are working properly before summer starts.

Prepare your home

- Install and close curtains, blinds or awnings in windows to deflect the heat.
- Identify cool zones in your home such as basements or one room that can be kept cooler.
- If feasible, install a window air conditioner in at least one room.
- Have fans available to help move cooler air indoors during the late evening and early morning hours.

Stay cool

- **Stay cool indoors:** If you do not have an air conditioner, prepare a list of the nearest air-conditioned spaces or cooling centres that can accommodate your needs (e.g., wheelchair accessible, children's activities, pet accommodations) and include how to get there (e.g., own vehicle, family, friend, public transport). Examples include:
 - Shopping malls
 - Movie theaters
 - Places of worship
 - Libraries
 - Community centers
 - Parks and green spaces
 - Swimming pools
 - Spray Parks
 - Indoor recreational facilities
- **Schedule outdoor activities carefully:** Lower your activity level and avoid strenuous activity during the heat. Plan errands or outdoor activities early or late in the day when it is generally cooler. Rest often in shady areas to allow your body to cool and recover.
- **Wear appropriate clothing:** Avoid direct sun by staying in the shade and wearing a hat and protective clothing. Use sunscreen and UV-protective eyewear.
- **Never leave people or pets alone in closed vehicles or in direct sunlight.**

Stay hydrated

- Drink plenty of water before you feel thirsty. Be aware that sugary, caffeinated or alcoholic drinks cause dehydration.
- **Warning:** Some medications (such as diuretics) may make you more likely to become dehydrated. Talk with your doctor about appropriate water intake during hot weather.

Cooling Tips:

Fans cannot effectively reduce body temperatures or prevent heat-related illness in people at-risk. Do not rely on fans as your primary cooling method during a Heat Warning.

Take a cool shower or bath, or go for a swim to draw heat from your body.

Sleep with a wet sheet or in a wet shirt.

Avoid using your oven or other appliances (e.g., large screen televisions) that could heat up your home more.

If it is safe, open windows and doors in evening to passively cool your home.

Stay informed

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.

Check for updates: Extreme heat and air quality events can coincide. Monitor your local news, weather and air quality alerts.

Know the signs of [extreme heat illness and what to do](#).

Monitor those at high risk by using the [Health Check during extreme heat events](#).

Contact information

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