

Extreme Heat

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

Extreme Heat

Many areas in Ontario have experienced unusual and prolonged periods of extreme heat within the last few years. Heat-related deaths and illness are preventable, yet people die due to extreme heat every year. Anyone can suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool. It's important to be aware of who is at greatest risk and what actions can be taken to prevent a heat-related illness or death.

Are You at Risk?

During a heat wave, everyone is at risk, but some groups are more vulnerable than others. They include:

- Infants (under 1 year)
- People 65 years of age or older
- People with chronic medical conditions (heart disease, respiratory conditions, diabetes, etc)
- People on certain types of medications (for high blood pressure, depression, insomnia, etc)
- Homeless people
- People with limited mobility
- People with mental impairment
- People who exercise vigorously outdoors (play sports, cyclists, gardeners)
- Outdoor workers (depending upon length or time and exertion levels) ¹
- People who work in places where heat is emitted through industrial processes (e.g., foundries, bakeries, dry cleaners) ²

¹ Please see the Ministry of Labour's Website located under useful heat-related links for further advice

Health Risks of Extreme Heat

Know When to Get Help

Adverse health effects can occur as a direct result of exposure to excessive heat:

- Heat cramps: symptoms/signs include painful muscular cramps, usually in the legs or abdomen
- Heat exhaustion: symptoms/signs include heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, fainting.
- Heat stroke: symptoms/signs include headache, dizziness, confusion or other altered mental state, fainting. Skin may be hot and dry, or the individual may be sweating due to high body temperature. This is a medical emergency that can prove fatal!

Increases in other health problems can also be seen, especially for those with other chronic medical conditions such as heart conditions.

Consult a healthcare provider or call Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000 or TTY at 1-877-797-0007) if you experience any of the above symptoms.

² Please see the Ministry of Labour's Website located under useful heat-related links for further advice

Things You Can Do to Protect Yourself

- Check weather network link regarding weather and humidex reports
www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca
- Check the Ministry of the Environment link for information regarding smog alerts
<http://www.airqualityontario.com/>.
- Wear light, loose fitting clothes.
- Drink plenty of water or natural fruit juices.
- Avoid beverages such as alcohol, coffee, tea or cola.
- Eat light, cool foods, and try to avoid using the oven or other hot appliances.
- Stay in air conditioned rooms, either at home, at a friend's place, or in public spaces such as malls, libraries, community centres or specially designated facilities.
- If you do not have air conditioning at home, open windows slightly but keep blinds closed during the day on the sunny side of your home.
- Keep indoor lights low or turned off.
- Take cool baths or showers periodically to cool down.
- If outdoors, stay in the shade and avoid strenuous physical activities. Wear sun block and a hat.
- Check up on friends, family and/or neighbours regularly who may be at high risk during a heat event.
- Do not leave people or pets in parked vehicles as they can get very hot!

Useful Heat-Related Links:

Health Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/environ/heat-chaleur_e.html

Ministry of Labour:

http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:LD9UV7WsQmQJ:www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/guidelines/gl_heat.html+province+of+ontario+heat+alerts&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=4

US Environmental Protection Agency:

<http://www.epa.gov/naturalevents/extremeheat.html>

US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.asp>

Ontario Public Health Unit Websites:

Algoma Health Unit

<http://www.ahu.on.ca/content/healthinfo/document.asp?CategoryID=1292&DocumentID=1309>

Chatham Kent Public Health Services

<http://www.chatham-kent.ca/community+services/Public+Health/recent+news/Extreme+Heat+Precautions.htm>

http://www.chatham-kent.ca/cityBundle_services/downloadsService/downloadfiles/03084eda-da8d-4952-ac20-d4227e28e9cd_extreme_temp.pdf

Elgin St Thomas Health Unit

http://www.elginhealth.on.ca/asp/health_topics_article.asp?HEALTH_TOPICS_ID=211&HEALTH_TOPICS_CATEGORY_ID=35

Grey Bruce Health Unit

<http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/hazard/heatexp-osurefs.htm>

<http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/hazard/heatrelatedillnessfs.html>

Halton Region Health Department

http://www.halton.ca/health/services/air_quality/heat_alert.htm

http://www.halton.ca/health/Resources/healthy_environment/pdf/extreme_heat_fact_sheet.pdf

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

http://www.healthunit.org/HeatExhaustion_HeatStroke.pdf

Middlesex-London Health Unit

<http://www.healthunit.com/article.aspx?ID=12016>

Niagara Region Public Health

http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health_wellness/inspection/highheat.aspx

City of Ottawa - Health

http://ottawa.ca/residents/safety/extreme_weather/index_en.html

Peel Regional Health Unit

<http://www.peelregion.ca/health/heat/symptoms.htm>

Peterborough County-City Health Unit

http://pcchu.peterborough.on.ca/heat_exhaustion.html

<http://pcchu.peterborough.on.ca/playing Safely in the Sun.htm>

Porcupine Health Unit

http://www.porcupinehu.on.ca/Population_Health/Cancer/sun-and-exposure.html

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Facts/cancer/Heat_related_illness.asp

http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Facts/cancer/Protecting_your_children_during_extreme_heat.asp

<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Facts/cancer/Introduction.asp>

Sudbury and District Health Unit

<http://www.sdhu.com/content/search/doc.asp?doc=1236&q=heat&lang=0>

<http://www.sdhu.com/content/search/doc.asp?doc=1238&q=heat&lang=0>

<http://www.sdhu.com/content/search/doc.asp?doc=1030&q=heat&lang=0>

<http://www.sdhu.com/content/search/doc.asp?doc=1237&q=heat&lang=0>

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

<http://www.tbdhu.com/PC/SkinCancer/HeatSafety.htm>

Toronto Region:

Toronto Public Health

<http://www.toronto.ca/health/beatheat.htm>

http://www.toronto.ca/ems/safety_tips/hot_1.htm

http://www.toronto.ca/health/heat_notification.htm

Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Community Health Department

<http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/region.nsf/0/82f790d78c7b75e185256d88005f2fe4?OpenDocument>

Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

http://www.wehealthunit.org/A-Z_Topics/heat-and-humidity