

# Preventing Heat-Related Illness

## A Checklist for Home Health Care Workers

Home Care Workers, Medical Case Managers, Caregivers

### Staying Safe during Extreme Heat

This checklist will help you support the health and safety of patients during very hot weather. Use this document to learn more about who is most at-risk, the health effects of extreme heat, methods to keep cool and stay safe at home, and how your organization can prepare for the dangerously hot weather.

### Who Is Most At-Risk?

Some of your patients may be more prone to experiencing adverse health effects during very hot weather and some may have multiple risk factors:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> People who work outside          | <input type="checkbox"/> People who are homebound                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People experiencing homelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Older adults                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletes                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Infants and young children                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People without A/C               | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant people                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People who live alone            | <input type="checkbox"/> People with some chronic medical conditions |

### How can you check on your clients?

Preparing the home to be cool and safe is especially important. On your home visit, observe how your patient can stay cool and prevent their home from becoming too hot:

- Patient has access to working air conditioning (a/c). Using a/c is the best way to stay safe and healthy.
- Patient frequently uses a/c.
- Patient does not use a/c, even though they have access.
- Patient has access to transportation to go somewhere else when it is very hot, if they do not have a/c. If so, where:
  - A family member or friend's home with a/c.
  - A library, senior center, or other public space with a/c or Another location: \_\_\_\_\_
- Follow-up with medical provider regarding diet, fluid, and medication intake (i.e fluid and/or salt restrictions).
- Patient's medications are being stored properly throughout the summer.
- Patient has access to an electric fan to help circulate cool air. Note: fans will not prevent heat-related illness in temperatures greater than 95°F.
- Patient's windows, curtains, and blinds are opened at night if temperatures are cooler, if able (e.g., safety concerns).
- Patient's windows, curtains, and blinds are closed during the hottest part of the day (typically 11am—4pm).
- Patient has an indoor thermometer and knows to monitor the temperature.
- Patient minimizes use of an oven or stove during very hot weather, which can heat the home.
- Patient is staying hydrated and has access to cold, healthy beverages. Note: caffeine, alcohol, and sugary drinks can cause dehydration.
- Patient is wearing loose fitting clothing, made from breathable fabric (e.g., cotton).

# What are the Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness?

Exposure to extreme heat can cause make some people extremely sick and make some chronic conditions worse. Note if your patient is experiencing any of the following signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and respond appropriately.

## Heat Stroke

- Very high body temperature (103 F or higher)
- Confusion
- Hot, red, dry, or damp skin
- Fast, strong pulse
- Pounding Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Losing consciousness

Heat stroke is an emergency, call 911.

## Heat Exhaustion

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle Cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Headache
- Fainting

Cool down immediately and seek medical attention if the person does not feel better after an hour.

## How Can You Plan to Keep Your Patients Safe?

To help keep patient patients safe and healthy this summer, ensure your organization has a plan, stays informed, and knows of the below resources:

- Ensure that your organization is enrolled in the PDPH Community Response Partner Network at [bit.ly/PhillyCRPN](http://bit.ly/PhillyCRPN) to receive notifications when the City declares a Heat Health Emergency. During a Heat Health Emergency, the following services are activated:
  - The [Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's Heatline](#) is open for calls. Any Philadelphia resident can call (215) 765-9040 to get safety tips and talk to medical professionals to discuss health issues.
  - City-operated [cooling centers](#) are open for extended hours. Cooling centers are air conditioned public spaces like libraries, senior centers, and recreation centers. Call 311 or go to [bit.ly/PhilaCoolingCenters](http://bit.ly/PhilaCoolingCenters) for cooling center locations.
  - Philadelphia's power utility company PECO [halts utility shut-offs](#). For the duration of the Heat Health Emergency, PECO will not turn off the power of customers' homes due to unpaid bills.
- Sign up for [Ready Philadelphia](#): To receive free text alerts to your phone on emergencies and severe weather, text "ReadyPhila" to 888-777.
- Prepare and train staff on summer heat safety and heat-related illness each spring.
- Review the risk factors associated with heat-related illness with staff during extreme heat events.
- Review the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness during extreme heat events.
- Help develop a heat emergency plan for your organization, which addresses special operations to ensure at risk populations stay healthy during extreme heat events.
- Notify patients when extreme heat is in the forecast.
- Provide patients with educational materials, including the PDPH Heat Brochure and Summer Newsletter, available at [bit.ly/PHPmaterials](http://bit.ly/PHPmaterials).