

Preventing Heat-Related Illness



A Checklist for Working with Community Members

Community Leaders, Case Managers, Social Workers, and Advocates

Use the checklist to identify who is most likely to get sick, how to help your community stay cool, and what resources are available during extreme heat events.

For more information on heat safety, visit www.phila.gov/heat.

Who Is Most At-Risk?

Some of your clients and community members may be more likely to get sick 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 Clients and Community Members?

When checking on clients and community members, observe how they can stay cool and prevent their home from becoming too hot:

- Community member lives alone and knows at least one person who can check on them when it is extremely hot.
- Community member is wearing loose fitting clothing, made from breathable fabric (e.g., cotton).
- Community member is staying hydrated and drinking cool water or fruit juice throughout the day. Note: caffeine, alcohol, and sugary drinks can cause dehydration.
- Community member does not engage in outdoor activities during extremely hot days.
- Community member closes curtains or blinds during the hottest part of the day (typically 10am–4pm) to block direct sunlight and avoid heating up the home.
- Community member opens windows when it's cooler outside than indoors to help regulate indoor temperature.
- Community member avoids using an oven or stove during very hot weather, which can heat the home.
- Community member 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.
- Community member has access to working air conditioning (a/c). Using a/c is the best way to stay safe and healthy.
- Community member frequently uses a/c.
- Community member does not use a/c, even though they have access. You have asked them why and discussed options to make a/c more accessible to them, such as utility assistance or an alternative location.
- Community member 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.
 - Another location: _____
- Community member has a plan to access cooling in case power goes out in their home.
- Community member knows where the closest cooling site is and how to check if it is open during an extreme heat event. (Call 311 or visit bit.ly/PHLHeatSafety).

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

Exposure to extreme heat can make some people extremely sick and make some chronic conditions worse. Note if a client or community member 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 one hour.

How Can You Plan to Keep Community Members Safe?

To help keep clients and community members safe and healthy this summer, ensure your organization has a plan, stays informed, and shares resources about available services.

- Sign up for [Ready Philadelphia](#): To receive free text alerts to your phone on emergencies and severe weather, text “[ReadyPhila](#)” to [888-777](#). Alerts are now available in eleven languages.
- Enroll in the PDPH Community Response Partner Network at [bit.ly/CRPNnewsletters](#) to receive notifications when the City declares a Heat Health Emergency and details about public health emergencies in Philadelphia.

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/PHLHeatSafety](#) 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.

- Prepare and train staff on heat-related illness and heat safety each spring.
- Develop a heat emergency plan for your organization to address special operations and ensure at-risk populations stay healthy during extreme heat events. Consider a Heat Date to reschedule if needed.
- Review the risk factors associated with heat-related illness. Before or during times of extreme heat, frequently check on community members with these risk factors, especially those who live alone.
- Notify clients and community members when extreme heat is in the forecast.
- Provide clients and community members and staff with educational materials, including the PDPH Heat Brochure, available at [bit.ly/PHPmaterials](#).
- Provide clients and community members with utility assistance information early in the season, so they can prepare to afford air conditioning. Offer the summer utility assistance flyer, available at [bit.ly/PHPmaterials](#).