

Protecting Illinoisans During Heat Emergencies – June 29, 2026

Summary and Action Items

- Local health departments and community health workers are urged to check on the well-being of people who are [vulnerable to heat injury due to underlying medical conditions](#), including those who live alone or do not have access to air conditioning.
- Clinicians are urged to [screen patients for risk of heat-related illness](#), and conduct a [medication review](#) provide guidance on [prevention](#) and [preparedness](#).
- LHDs and health care workers should share information widely on the location of cooling centers ([Keep Cool Illinois](#)) for those who may need them. Access to air conditioning during heat waves can save lives, particularly for frail older adults and those with debilitating chronic conditions.

Background information to share with community members

With dangerously high levels of heat forecasted across Illinois this week, including heat index forecasts above 100 degrees, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is warning Illinoisans to take preventive actions to avoid heat-related illnesses.

Exposure to extreme heat, especially prolonged exposure, can cause [serious illness](#), including:

- **Heat stroke** – The most serious heat-related illness, when body temperature can reach 106 °F or higher in as little as 10 minutes. Heat stroke can cause permanent disability or death if the person does not receive immediate emergency treatment.
- **Heat exhaustion** – Occurs when the body can't cool itself through sweating and can progress to heat stroke. Symptoms can include muscle cramps, headaches, dizziness, weakness, fatigue, nausea and vomiting.

The [highest risk age groups](#) are infants and young children (under 5) and older adults (65+), but young adults are also at elevated risk due to high heat exposure from work and exercise.

Air temperatures can rapidly reach over 130 degrees inside unattended vehicles. Never leave a family member or pet in an unattended vehicle, even if the windows are open. Exposure to this level of heat, even for short periods of time, can lead to severe illness or death.

IDPH urges clinicians, local health departments, and community health workers to check on the well-being of vulnerable people who live alone without air conditioning. The Canadian National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCCEH) has prepared a helpful checklist to use for in-person or remote health checks during heat emergencies: [NCCEH Extreme Heat Health Checklist](#).

Illinois Department of Public Health

Protect from heat stroke and heat exhaustion with these basic steps

- Stay in an air-conditioned area during the hottest hours of the day. There are cooling center locations across Illinois that can be located at the [Keep Cool Illinois](#) website, for those who do not have air conditioning.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing with light colors, as they reflect heat and sunlight.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water often and not waiting until thirsty. Avoid beverages that can dehydrate like those that contain caffeine or alcohol.
- Avoid unnecessary hard work or activities outside or in a building without air conditioning, especially during times of peak heat from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For those who must be outside, stay in the shade as much as possible and take frequent breaks.

Symptoms of heat stroke to look out for

- Body temperature over 103 degrees Fahrenheit
- Difficulty breathing
- An elevated heart rate
- Skin hot to the touch
- Feeling dizzy, nausea or disorientation

If someone is experiencing these symptoms, call 911 immediately. While waiting for medical assistance, use ice packs on the neck and underarms and drink cool water to lower the person's body temperature.

Heat can also adversely affect the health of pets

- Never leave your pet in a parked car, even with the windows open - they can suffer from heat-related illness too.
- Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets and leave the water in a shady area.

Planning ahead for heat emergencies – how clinicians can help

Clinicians can help by being familiar with [guidance for heat and health](#), routinely [screening for risk of heat-related illness](#) and encouraging patients to create a plan to stay safe, including a [medication review plan](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has multiple resources for clinicians for screening patients for risk and practical steps to prepare.

Contact

The Emerging Health Issues Division at IDPH is available for consultation on heat related illness and mitigation. Please contact graham.briggs@illinois.gov with questions or concerns.

Target Audience

Local Health Departments; Local EMAs; Hospitals/Clinics, Administration, Medical Directors, ED Personnel, EMS Staff, ERCs, Nurses/Nursing Directors, PIOs; FQHC Administrators, Medical Staff, PIOs; Health Care Partners, Physicians, Women's Health, Pediatricians, OB/GYN/Doulas/Mid-Wives; Health Care Coalitions, All Inclusive Care for the Elderly, Home Health Care, Hospice; IL Department on Aging, IL Department of Human Services, IL Emergency Management Agency, IL Department of Children and Family Services; IL State Medical Society, IL Rural Health Association, IL Health and Hospital Association, IL Homecare and Hospice Council, IL Primary Health Care Association, Urgent Care Association of America.

CC: IDPH Leadership Staff, IDPH Deputy Directors, IDPH OPR Leads, IDPH ERCs / REMSCs, IDPH RHOs, IDPH Medical Services Leads, and IDPH HAN Team

Resources

- [Hot Weather: Understanding and Preventing Heat-Related Illnesses - IDPH](#)
- [National Weather Service Heat Safety](#)
- Ready Illinois, a program run by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, provides information on how to protect yourself and your family: [IEMA Extreme Heat Website](#)
- IDPH Fast PHACTS Clinical Presentation on Summer and Health: [Heat, Bugs, and Bites: What every clinician should know going into the summer!](#)
- [Who is Most at Risk to Extreme Heat? - Heat.gov](#)
- [Heat-related Illnesses | Heat | CDC](#)
- [Workplace Recommendations | Heat Stress | CDC](#)
- [Quick Start Guide for Clinicians on Heat and Health | Heat Health | CDC](#)
- [Clinical Guidance for Heat Health | Heat Health | CDC](#)
- [Heat and Medications – Guidance for Clinicians | Heat Health | CDC](#)
- [NCCEH Extreme Heat Health Checklist](#)
- [Climate-Informed Patient Care as a Social Determinant of Health | JAMA Forum | JAMA Health Forum | JAMA Network](#)