

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES AND HEAT

Why should I pay attention to heat?

Extreme heat events can trigger a variety of **heat-related illnesses** (e.g. heat stroke), dehydration, and, in extreme situations, can lead to permanent disability or death.

Signs of heat illness may include: changes in behaviour, dizziness or fainting, nausea or vomiting, headache, fast breathing or heartbeat, extreme thirst and decreased urination. Severe signs of illness requiring immediate medical care include a high body temperature, confusion, hallucinations, lack of coordination, seizures, or a loss of consciousness.

Older adults are especially sensitive to the health effects of heat, particularly those with pre-existing conditions or who take certain medications.

Making sure that residents have a way to stay cool and drink plenty of water is the best way to prevent heat-related illnesses.

What can I do to prepare for the heat season?

1. Create and/or update your **heat response plan** and provide training to staff to make sure that they know what to do to protect the health of the residents and themselves during heat alerts.
2. **Prepare staff** to recognize the signs of heat illness and know when it is an emergency.
3. Know where to get information on **heat alerts**
 - [Public Weather Alerts for British Columbia](#)
 - [Weather App](#)
4. Learn about ways to **keep the building cool** during the summer. Some examples include:
 - Plant trees on the side of the building where the sun hits the building during the hottest part of the day and use trees to create shade in outdoor spaces.
 - Install exterior window shading or glazing to reduce sun penetration into the indoor space.
 - Contact a professional to install a green roof on the building.
 - If passive cooling (e.g. closing blinds, opening windows in the evenings, using fans) is not enough to keep your building comfortable, consider installing an energy efficient active cooling system (e.g. ductless heat pump) to be used on hot days.
 - If the entire facility cannot be cooled, consider creating a specific cooling room where residents can cool off for a few hours on hot days.
 - If the building has air conditioning, make sure it works properly before the hot weather starts.
5. Look up nearby locations to visit where residents can cool off for a few hours a day during extreme heat events (e.g. a public library, community center, shaded park, etc.).



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What should I do during a heat alert?

1. Check the latest **heat alert information** and weather forecast.
2. **Pay close attention** to how residents are feeling and watch for signs of heat illness.
3. Give residents **plenty of water**.
4. **Keep residents cool**.
 - Make sure they are dressed for the weather with loose fitting and light–coloured clothing made of breathable fabric.
 - Keep the building cool by using shades or blinds to block the sun and opening windows at night to let cooler air in if the building is not air conditioned.
 - Prepare meals that don't need to be cooked in an oven.
 - If the building is hot:
 - Give residents a break from the heat by ensuring they spend a few hours in a cool place (e.g. air conditioned room, tree-shaded area, community center).
 - Use water to help residents cool off (e.g. cool shower or bath, apply water mist or wet towels to the body before sitting in front of a fan).
 - Reschedule outdoor activities to cooler times of the day and avoid sun exposure when outside.

Heat Resources

Public Weather Alerts for British Columbia	BC weather alerts
Weather App	Push notifications for all weather alerts issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada for your location and saved locations anywhere in Canada
Health Facilities Preparation for Extreme Heat	Recommendations for effective health facility management to protect your staff and patients.
Acute Care During Extreme Heat	Recommendations and Information for Health Care Workers
Community Care During Extreme Heat	This fact sheet is for Health Care Workers working outside of facilities in the community and in patient/client homes
Vancouver Coastal Health Extreme Heat Webpage	Information for the public, community partners and health professionals regarding extreme heat, including a number of links to public factsheets and resources
Heat-related illness	Information on heat related illness symptoms and prevention for the public in multiple languages
Advice on staying cool at home during COVID-19	Information about what to do outdoors and indoors during warm weather
Staying healthy in the heat infographics	Three 1-page cartoon infographics: “Signs and Symptoms”, “Who’s at Risk” and “Safety Tips”
Beat the heat resources	More links to BC resources on heat
Protect Yourself from Extreme Heat	Pamphlet on extreme heat for older adults