

COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES & HEAT

Why should I pay attention to heat?

Extreme heat can trigger a variety of heat-related illnesses including dehydration, heat exhaustion and **heat stroke, a medical emergency** that can lead to permanent disability or death.

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.



Signs of heat exhaustion:

- Skin rash
- Heavy sweating
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid breathing & heartbeat
- Headache
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle cramps
- Extreme thirst
- Dark urine & decreased urination

Anyone with these symptoms should be moved to a cool space, clothing loosened and given plenty of water to drink, and cooled down with cool compresses applied to the back of the neck. Remember to change compress regularly and continue cooling and hydration until symptoms resolve.



Signs of heat stroke:

- High body temperature (above 38°C)
- Fainting or decreased consciousness
- Confusion
- Lack of coordination
- Very hot and red skin

CALL 911 OR SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION.

Submerge some or all of the body in cool water, remove clothes and apply wet towels.



COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES & HEAT

What can I do to **prepare for the heat season?**

- ☐ It is recommended that community care facilities expand their emergency plan to include a **plan to respond to extreme heat**.
- ☐ **Prepare staff** to recognize the signs of heat illness and know when it is an emergency.
- ☐ Know where to get information on **heat alerts**.
 - [Public Weather Alerts for British Columbia](#)
 - [Weather App](#)
- ☐ Learn about ways to **keep the building cool** during the summer. Some examples include:
 - Install exterior window shading or glazing to reduce sun penetration into the indoor space.
 - 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 outdoors.
 - Contact a professional to install a green roof on the building.
 - If passive cooling (e.g. outdoor shading or glazing, closing blinds, opening windows and using fans to bring outdoor air in during the evenings) is not enough to keep your building comfortable, consider installing an energy efficient active cooling system (i.e. heat pump) to be used on hot days. Ideally temperatures should be below 26°C indoors.
 - If the entire facility cannot be cooled, consider creating a specific cooling room with air conditioning 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.
- ☐ 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.).



COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES & HEAT

What should I do during a heat alert?

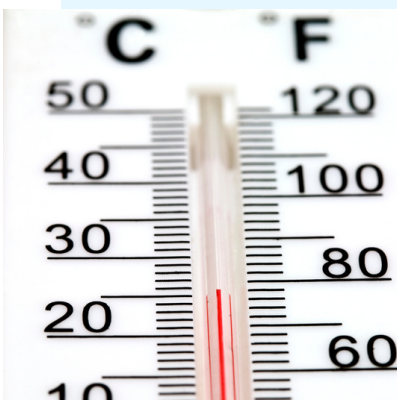
- ☐ Check the latest **heat alert information** and weather forecast.
- ☐ **Pay close attention** to how residents are feeling and watch for signs of heat illness.
- ☐ Review Heat Related Illnesses: Prevention and Management in Long-Term Care with care staff.
- ☐ Provide additional fluids around the clock, particularly water, juices, and popsicles.
- ☐ **Keep residents and the building cool.**
 - Keep shades and blinds closed during the day.
 - If you don't have air conditioning, close windows around 10:00am to trap the cooler air inside and open windows and doors around 08:00pm to let the cooler overnight air in.
 - Use multiple fans strategically to help move cooler air into the space overnight if possible
 - Prepare meals that don't need to be cooked in an oven.
 - Make sure residents and staff are dressed for the weather with loose fitting and light-coloured clothing made of breathable fabric.
 - Reschedule outdoor activities to cooler times of the day and avoid sun exposure when outside
 - 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, community center, library, tree-shaded area etc.).
 - Use water to help residents cool off (e.g. cool shower or bath, apply cool water or wet towels to the skin or have the residents wear wet shirts).

Note: Fans may not effectively reduce body temperatures or prevent heat-related illness in people at risk. Do not rely on fans as your primary cooling method during an Extreme Heat Emergency.



COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES & HEAT

Indoor temperature thresholds and actions



- ☐ When updating your heat response plan, consider having temperature actions, for example:
 - Standard measures to maintain normal indoor temperatures and prevent indoor temperatures from exceeding 26°C.
 - Escalated measures to take if there is a likelihood of indoor temperatures approaching or exceeding 26°C.
 - Emergency measures that the facility will take if the indoor temperature exceeds 26°C for a sustained period.

- ☐ To implement temperature based actions, daily monitoring of the indoor temperature will be required. The following information provides guidance on how to get the most reliable measurements:
 - The larger the facility, the more measurements we recommend taking. We recommend having a minimum of three different locations throughout the building, and more for larger facilities.
 - At least one of these temperatures should be recorded in a common room.
 - At least one of these temperatures should be recorded in a resident bedroom that is expected to experience a high heat burden (for example, a south facing room on the upper-most level).
 - Indoor temperature should be measured in the evening, when indoor temperatures are expected to be at their daily maximum.

- ☐ Implementation of the site's emergency heat response measures if the observed indoor temperature exceeds 26°C

- ☐ A protocol for reporting excursions above 26°C to your VCH Licensing Officer

COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES & HEAT

Heat Resources

<u>Public Weather Alerts for British Columbia</u>	BC weather alerts
<u>Weather App</u>	Push notifications for all weather alerts issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada for your location and saved locations anywhere in Canada
<u>Health Canada Health Facilities Preparation for Extreme Heat</u>	Recommendations for effective health facility management to protect your staff and patients.
<u>Health Canada Acute Care During Extreme Heat</u>	Recommendations and Information for Health Care Workers
<u>Health Canada Community Care During Extreme Heat</u>	This fact sheet is for Health Care Workers working outside of facilities in the community and in patient/client homes
<u>Vancouver Coastal Health Extreme Heat Webpage</u>	Information for the public, community partners and health professionals regarding extreme heat, including a number of links to public factsheets and resources
<u>Vancouver Coastal Health Extreme Heat Poster</u>	A poster describing heat illness symptoms and how to stay cool during a heat event.
<u>Health Canada Staying Healthy in the Heat Infographics</u>	Three 1-page cartoon infographics: "Signs and Symptoms", "Who's at Risk" and "Safety Tips"
<u>BC Housing Extreme Heat Information for Tenants</u>	Poster from BC Housing on tips to beat the heat
<u>Vancouver Coastal Health / Providence Health Care Heat Related Illnesses: Prevention and Management in Long-Term Care</u>	Decision Support Tool for care staff- outlines how to prevent and manage Heat Related Illnesses: heat Exhaustion and Heath Stroke.
<u>Health Canada Protect Yourself From Extreme Heat</u>	Pamphlet on extreme heat for older adults
<u>Prepared BC Extreme Heat Guide</u>	A new BC guide to help you prepare for the season and know what to do during an extreme heat event.