

Heat Stroke Alert

This Medical Update provides information on conditions that may cause serious injuries and in some cases death. Our hope is that this Summer Alert will help you be prepared.

Heat and humidity can put anyone at risk for heat stroke or heat exhaustion. This office has received reports of clients becoming ill and dying from heat stroke because they live in very hot buildings, because they participated in vigorous activities when outdoor temperatures were high, or because they or others made choices that caused their body temperature to rise to very dangerous levels.

Clients receiving services for mental health, developmental disabilities, emotional disturbance, and substance use may be at **added risk** due to:

- A lack of control over temperature regulation in their environment, which may have no air conditioning and/or poor air circulation.
- Taking medications or drugs that reduce the body's ability to sweat, or that increase fluid loss, such as diuretics, anticholinergics, antihistamines, beta-blockers, benzodiazepines, amphetamines, neuroleptics, phenothiazines, tricyclic antidepressants, lithium, cocaine, and alcohol.
- Being reluctant or unable to drink adequate amounts of non-caffeinated liquids.

In order to **reduce the risk of heat stroke**:

- Drink plenty of fluids and/or provide plenty of fluids to those who need support. Sugary, alcoholic, and caffeinated beverages can increase the risk of dehydration. Enjoy and/or encourage fluid-rich foods, including fruits, veggies, and soups.
- If possible, schedule outdoor activities during the cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or evening. Take breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- Know what medications can put clients at risk and know who takes them (see above).
- Pay attention to weather forecasts and heat advisories. Plan ahead and adjust your activities based on the forecasted temperatures. Bring along lots of fluids.
- Check on people as often as necessary and appropriate to ensure their health and safety.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency!

Signs and symptoms of heat stroke

Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature. The body's temperature rises quickly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. Body temperature may

rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Recognizing heat stroke

Warning signs of heat stroke vary but may include the following:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 102°F when checked by mouth)
- Red, hot, and dry or damp skin (no sweating)
- Throbbing headache
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Dizziness or confusion
- Nausea
- Unconsciousness/unresponsiveness
- Seizures

What to do

If you see any of these signs, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance (911) while you begin cooling the victim. Do the following:

- Get the person to shade or another cooler place and have them lie down.
- Apply cool water or ice packs to the skin to help cool them down.
- Do not give the person anything to drink.
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

If you experience any heat stroke or heat exhaustion signs or symptoms dial 911.

For more information on preventing heat related issues:

[About Heat and Your Health | Heat Health | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/prevention/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/faq.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/prevention/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/faq.html)

[Extreme Heat Events - MN Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/extremeheat.html)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/extremeheat.html)