

This alert is for those who work with people receiving services for mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities, and should be posted in facilities or shared with people as appropriate. It provides information on important health-related issues that can impact people in the summer.

Air Quality Index (AQI)

- The Air Quality Index (AQI) provides information on the level of pollution in the air at a given time and ranges from 0 to 500. An AQI value below 100 is generally acceptable, while values over 100 can impact people who are more sensitive to the effects of pollution, such as the elderly, children, and people with lung disease. The five major pollutants that impact air quality are ground-level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. From [AQI Basics | AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/) (<https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/>).
- Wildfires can be a significant cause of poor air quality, even if the fires are thousands of miles away. Wildfires can produce very fine particles that worsen existing breathing difficulties and can even cause breathing trouble in healthy people. Find more information on air quality and the effects of smoke here: [Wildland Fires and Smoke | US EPA](https://www.epa.gov/air-quality/wildland-fires-and-smoke) (<https://www.epa.gov/air-quality/wildland-fires-and-smoke>). Current wildfire information can be found at: [WFCA Fire Map: Tracking Current Wildfires in the US](https://wfca.com/fire-map) (<https://wfca.com/fire-map>).
- Check the current AQI in your area at [AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov/) (<https://www.airnow.gov/>) and consider postponing activities when it's high.
- For Minnesota-specific information, please see the [Air Quality, Climate and Health - MN Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/air.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/air.html>).

Heat

- Refer to the Heat Stroke Alert.

Insects

- Check buildings for holes in screens and other spots where insects can get in.
- Apply insect repellent before going outside, and when used directly on skin be sure to wash it off when returning inside.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants tucked into socks, and closed-toe shoes when in woods or grassy areas, to help prevent tick bites.
- Check for ticks after being outdoors.
- Shower as soon as possible after coming indoors. Ticks take several hours to attach themselves to the skin; in the meantime, they can be washed away.
- For more on prevention of tick bites, as well as free posters, see: [Minnesota Department of Health | Tickborne Diseases](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tickborne/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tickborne/index.html>)
- Refer to the Insect Sting Alert.

Sun

- Some medications, such as certain antipsychotic medications and certain antibiotics, can put people at a higher risk for sunburn. Here is a link that provides further details on this topic: [The Sun and Your Medicine | FDA](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/special-features/sun-and-your-medicine) (<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/special-features/sun-and-your-medicine>).
- Reduce exposure to the sun through use of (sun) umbrellas, hats, long-sleeved, lightweight summer clothing, etc.
- Protect eyes with sunglasses.
- The American Academy of Dermatology recommends using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF value of 30 or higher, even on cloudy days. For more information, see [Sunscreen FAQs \(aad.org\)](https://www.aad.org/media/stats-sunscreen) (<https://www.aad.org/media/stats-sunscreen>).
- FDA regulations require all sunscreens and other nonprescription drugs to have an expiration date unless stability testing conducted by the manufacturer has shown that the product will remain stable for at least three years. **This means that a sunscreen product that doesn't have an expiration date should be considered expired three years after purchase.** Expired sunscreens should be discarded because there is no assurance that they remain safe and fully effective.
- Applying Sunscreen
- Apply sunscreen 15-30 minutes before going outside.
- Reapply at least every two hours, and more often if you're sweating or during water activities.
- Read more at: [FDA.gov | Sunscreen: How to Help Protect Your Skin from the Sun](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/understanding-over-counter-medicines/sunscreen-how-help-protect-your-skin-sun) (<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/understanding-over-counter-medicines/sunscreen-how-help-protect-your-skin-sun>).

Water safety

- Refer to the Water Safety Alert.
- Provide training on policies for all staff prior to the swimming season.
- Know what hazards to look for in the specific water environments you'll be in, whether it's the beach, water park, pool, river, or lake.
- Review Individual Abuse Prevention Plans prior to enjoying water activities, when applicable.