
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Reminder - Heat wave health – stay safe while enjoying Step 3 activities and occasions

As high temperatures and humidex values continue for much of Northern BC into the beginning of July, Northern Health is again reminding all residents and visitors to be aware of the risks of too much heat or sun exposure.

“As B.C. moves into Step 3 of the provincial restart plan, and with the July 1 statutory holiday, we expect that many Northern residents are planning gatherings and activities with fewer COVID-19 related restrictions,” said NH Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Jong Kim. “We’re appealing for people to keep the current heat wave in mind while planning and participating in activities or outings, to protect themselves and their loved ones, as we have done all along through the pandemic.”

Excessive heat exposure can lead to weakness, disorientation and exhaustion. In severe cases, it can also lead to heat related illness or heat stroke, also known as sunstroke. Heat stroke can be a life-threatening medical emergency. Symptoms include pale cool moist skin, fever, heavy sweating, rapid breathing, headache, confusion, weakness or fatigue, nausea and muscle cramps.

People with these symptoms should move to a cool environment, rest, and drink cool, non-alcoholic beverages, and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.

Regularly check older adults, children and others for signs of heat-related illness and make sure they are keeping cool and drinking plenty of fluids. Check on those who are unable to leave their homes, and people with emotional or mental health concerns whose judgment may be impaired.

If symptoms of heat-related illness or heat stroke worsen, seek medical attention. If at any time you believe you require urgent medical attention, do not hesitate to go to the emergency department, or call 9-1-1 for transportation. **Consider non-urgent care options, to reduce pressure on hospital emergency rooms.**

- Patients who aren’t sure whether their condition would warrant an emergency room visit, or who need health advice can call HealthLink BC (8-1-1), or visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca for non-emergency health information, 24/7. (For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.)
- If you feel unwell, and are unable to call your family physician, call the NH Virtual Clinic at 1-844-645-7811 to access a family doctor or nurse

practitioner: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/locations/medical-clinics/virtual-clinic>

- For non-urgent care, use community health services including making an appointment with your family practitioner

To further protect you and your family from heat illness, keep the following in mind:

- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink extra water even before you feel thirsty and if you are active on a hot day. Avoid beverages that contain caffeine or alcohol as these lead to dehydration.
- Keep cool. Stay indoors in air-conditioned houses and buildings such as malls, community centres, arenas and shops. At temperatures above 30°C (86°F), fans alone while helpful may not be able to prevent heat-related illness.
- Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and a wide brimmed hat, or use an umbrella for shade.
- If you do go outside, plan your outdoor activity before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., when the sun's Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the weakest, and seek shaded green spaces.
- Avoid sunburn. Use a broad spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher on exposed skin and an SPF 30 lip balm. Remember, sunscreen will protect against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays but not from the heat.
- Avoid tiring work or exercise in hot, humid environments. If you must work or exercise, drink 2 to 4 glasses of non-alcoholic fluids each hour. Rest breaks are important and should be taken in the shade.

For more information on heat-related health issues, including heat exhaustion and heatstroke, visit [Beat the Heat – HealthlinkBC](#), or call 8-1-1 for health advice 24/7.

Media Contact: NH media line – 877-961-7724