



## Northeast District Department of Health

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### PRESS RELEASE

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### **Heat-Related Illness a Concern During Heatwave**

Northeast District Department of Health Offers Advice to Stay Cool and Healthy

BROOKLYN – Forecasts of extreme heat conditions are prompting the Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) to issue reminders on avoiding heat-related illness, which is of particular concern during hot weather as high temperatures and humidity weaken the body's ability to cool itself. Prevention tips to stay safe in extreme heat include:

- Keep your body temperature cool to avoid heat-related illness.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Check with your doctor as to how much you should drink if you are on fluid restrictions. Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or a lot of sugar.
- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible. Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device. Call 2-1-1 or check [211ct.org](http://211ct.org) to find air-conditioned shelters or cooling centers.
- If you must be outdoors, try to limit your outdoor activity to the morning and evening. If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, STOP all activity. Rest often in shady areas so that your body has a chance to cool off.
- Avoid direct sunlight. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing and broad-spectrum sunscreen when outdoors.
- Take cool showers or baths to remove extra body heat 25 times faster than cool air.
- Check on those most at-risk several times a day. This includes infants, young children, older adults, individuals who are overweight or physically ill, especially those with chronic conditions.
- Pets that cannot be brought indoors should be provided ready access to water and shade to keep them cool.
- *Never* leave a person or pet in a hot car, even if the windows are cracked open. To remind yourself that a child is in the car, keep a stuffed animal in the car seat. When the child is buckled in, place the stuffed animal in the front with the driver. When leaving your car, check to be sure everyone is out of the car. Do not overlook any children who have fallen asleep in the car.

For more prevention tips, check the CT Department of Public Health website at:  
<https://portal.ct.gov/dph/Communications/Crisis-and-Emergency-Risk-Communication/Extreme-Heat>

Exposure to extreme heat can result in several serious conditions. Heat-related illnesses include:

- **Heat stroke** is the most serious heat-related illness. It occurs when the body can no longer control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. When heat stroke occurs, the body temperature can rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause permanent disability or death if the person does not receive emergency treatment.
- **Heat exhaustion** is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through excessive sweating. Heat exhaustion is most likely to affect the elderly, people with high blood pressure, and those working in a hot environment.
- **Rhabdomyolysis** (rhabdo) is a medical condition associated with heat stress and prolonged physical exertion. Rhabdo causes the rapid breakdown, rupture, and death of muscle. When muscle tissue dies, electrolytes and large proteins are released into the bloodstream. This can cause irregular heart rhythms, seizures, and damage to the kidneys.
- **Heat syncope** is a fainting (syncope) episode or dizziness that usually occurs when standing for too long or suddenly standing up after sitting or lying. Factors that may contribute to heat syncope include dehydration and lack of acclimatization.
- **Heat cramps** usually affect those who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture levels. Low salt levels in muscles cause painful cramps. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.
- **Heat rash** is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather.

For symptoms of heat-related illness and first aid for these conditions, visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's heat stress website at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heatrelillness.html>

The [Northeast District Department of Health](#) prevents illness, promotes wellness, and protects public health for nearly 85,000 residents in 12 northeast Connecticut towns.

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