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#50-19

**AS SUMMER BEGINS, NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE OFFER TIPS FOR NEW
YORKERS TO BEAT THE HEAT**

People who do not have or use air conditioning and have certain risk factors are more likely to suffer heat-related illness and death

June 21, 2019 — To mark the first day of summer, the New York City Emergency Management Department and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene encourage New Yorkers to beat the heat by knowing the hazards they may face, having a plan to stay safe, and keeping informed.

In New York City, most heat-related deaths occur after exposure to heat in homes without air conditioners. Air conditioning is the best way to stay safe and healthy when it is hot outside, but some people at risk of heat illness do not have or do not turn on an air conditioner.

The New York City Emergency Management Department and the Health Department urge New Yorkers to take steps to protect themselves and help others who may be at increased risk from the heat. People at risk are those who do not have access to air conditioning and:

- Have chronic medical, mental health, cognitive or developmental conditions.
- Take certain medicines that can impact body temperature.
- Have limited mobility or are unable to leave their homes.
- Are obese.
- Misuse alcohol or drugs.

Some New Yorkers are at greater risk when it is hot than others. Older adults are more likely than younger New Yorkers to have some combination of the risk factors described above. In addition, as people get older, their ability to maintain a safe body temperature declines — resulting in an increased risk for heat-related illness. African Americans are twice as likely to die from heat stroke compared to Whites due in part to social and economic disparities, including access to air conditioning. Certain neighborhoods are also more vulnerable to the health impacts of heat than other neighborhoods; visit the NYC Environment and Health Data portal to learn more about the [Heat Vulnerability Index](#).

“Extreme heat is dangerous, especially for vulnerable populations like older adults or people with chronic medical conditions. We want to remind New Yorkers of the dangers associated with hot temperatures and inform them of the steps they can take to beat the heat,” **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito** said.

“On average, more New Yorkers die from heat than any other extreme weather event,” **Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot** said. “It is important that we check in on family members or neighbors who are susceptible to heat-related illnesses. If you know someone who doesn't have

air conditioning in their home, be a buddy and help them find a place to cool off, even for a couple hours.”

“Summer is here, which means hotter days and an uptick in heat-related illness,” **Director of the Mayor’s Office of Resiliency Jainey Bavishi** said. “We want all New Yorkers to stay safe and check in on their neighbors, friends, and family members when temperatures are high.”

The National Weather Service issues heat advisories for NYC when the heat index is forecast to reach at least 95°F for two or more days or 100°F for any period. New Yorkers can visit [NYC.gov/beattheheat](https://nyc.gov/beattheheat) to get more information about how to prepare for extreme heat and locate a cooling center. Cooling centers are air-conditioned facilities such as libraries, community centers, senior centers, and NYCHA facilities that are open to the public during heat emergencies. New Yorkers can test their knowledge on heat safety [here](#).

CHECK ON THOSE MOST AT-RISK DURING EXTREME HEAT:

- Encourage family, friends, and neighbors at risk for heat-related illness to use air conditioning. Check on them during heat waves or extreme heat, and help them get to an air-conditioned place if they cannot stay cool at home. During extreme heat, NYC opens cooling centers throughout the five boroughs where New Yorkers can go to cool off.
- If they do not have air conditioners, encourage family, friends, and neighbors at risk for heat-related illness to find out whether they qualify for a free air conditioner through the New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) by calling the Human Resources Administration at 1-800-692-0557 or 311.

During extreme heat, the Department of Social Services (DSS) issues a Code Red Alert. During Code Reds, shelters are available system-wide to anyone reasonably believed to be homeless. Homeless individuals experiencing heat-related discomfort are also able to access the designated cooling area at any shelter. Transportation to cooling centers is available via DSS outreach teams who engage with potentially homeless individuals every day of the year and intensify engagement during extreme heat. In addition, home care agencies are on the lookout for clients who may need assistance. Case management agencies also call homebound seniors to help them stay safe.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE HEAT:

- Go to an air-conditioned location, even if for a few hours.
- Stay out of the sun and avoid extreme temperature changes.
- Avoid strenuous activity, especially during the sun’s peak hours: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m.
- Remember: drink water, rest, and locate shade if you are working outdoors or if your work is strenuous. Drink water every 15 minutes even if you are not thirsty, rest in the

shade, and watch out for others on your team. Your employer is required to provide water, rest, and shade when work is being done during extreme heat.

- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing when inside without air conditioning or outside.
- Drink fluids, particularly water, even if you do not feel thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool. Those on fluid-restricted diets or taking diuretics should first speak with their doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider. Avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Cool down with a cool bath or shower.
- Participate in activities that will keep you cool, such as going to the movies, shopping at a mall, or swimming at a pool or beach. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. The NYC Parks Department [has free swimming lessons](#) for kids and adults. Visit [here](#) for more information on pool and water safety.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens and, in apartments where children live, window guards. Window guards can prevent children from falling out of a window and suffering serious injuries or even death. Screens keep mosquitoes that can spread West Nile Virus out of your home and keep cats from falling out of windows.
- Never leave your children or pets in the vehicle, even for a few minutes.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS:

Call 911 immediately if you or someone you know has:

- Hot dry skin.
- Trouble breathing.
- Rapid heartbeat.
- Confusion, disorientation, or dizziness.
- Nausea and vomiting.

If you or someone you know feels weak or faint, go to a cool place and drink water. If there is no improvement, call a doctor or 911.

KEEPING YOUR PETS SAFE

- **Avoid dehydration:** Pets can dehydrate quickly, so give them plenty of fresh, clean water.
- **Walk your dog early and late:** When the temperature is very high, do not let your dog linger on hot asphalt. Your pet's body can heat up quickly, and sensitive paw pads can burn.
- **Know when your pet is in danger:** Symptoms of overheating in pets include excessive panting or difficulty breathing, increased heart and respiratory rate, drooling, mild weakness, unresponsiveness, or even collapse. Animals with flat faces like pugs and Persian cats are more susceptible to heat stroke since they cannot pant as effectively. They should be kept cool in air-conditioned rooms as much as possible.

IMPROPER FIRE HYDRANT USE:

The improper opening of fire hydrants wastes 1,000 gallons of water per minute, causes flooding on city streets, and lowers water pressure to dangerous levels, which hamper the ability of the Fire Department to fight fire safely and quickly.

Use “spray caps” to reduce hydrant output to a safe 25 gallons per minute while still providing relief from the heat. To obtain a spray cap, an adult 18 years or older with proper identification can go to his or her local firehouse and request one.

ENERGY-SAVING TIPS:

During periods of intense electrical usage, such as on hot, humid days, it is important to conserve energy as much as possible to avoid brownouts and other electrical disruptions. While diminishing your power usage may seem inconvenient, your cooperation will help to ensure that utilities are able to provide uninterrupted electrical service to you and your neighbors, particularly those who use electric powered medical equipment or are at risk of heat-related illness and death:

- Set your air conditioner to 78°F or “low.”
- Run appliances such as ovens, washing machines, dryers and dishwashers in the early morning or late at night when it is cooler outside to reduce heat and moisture in your home.
- Close doors to keep cool air in and hot air out when the air conditioner is running.
- Keep shades, blinds, and curtains closed. About 40 percent of unwanted heat comes through windows.
- Turn off air conditioners, lights, and other appliances when not at home, and use a timer or smart technology to turn on your air conditioner about a half-hour before arriving home. Keep air conditioner filters clean.
- If you run a business, keep your door closed while the air conditioner is running.
- Tell your utility provider if you or someone you know depend on medical equipment that requires electricity.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/beattheheat. New Yorkers are encouraged to sign up for Notify NYC, the City’s free emergency communications program. To sign up for Notify NYC, download the [free mobile application](#), visit nyc.gov/NotifyNYC, call 311, or follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.

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MEDIA CONTACT: Omar Bourne [\(718\) 422-4888](tel:7184224888)

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