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#33-18

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

Older adults, people who have chronic medical or psychiatric conditions, misuse drugs or alcohol, or those taking certain medications are at an increased risk from extreme heat

New podcast [episode](#) highlights tips vulnerable populations can take to protect themselves from extreme heat

June 21, 2018 — 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, and staying informed.

“Extreme heat is dangerous, especially for vulnerable New Yorkers,” said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “The best way to beat the heat is to use air conditioning or get to a cool place. Remember to check in on at-risk family, friends, neighbors, senior citizens, and those with chronic health conditions.”

“Extremely hot weather can be dangerous for those who do not have air conditioning and are older or have chronic health conditions,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “We urge New Yorkers to set their air conditioners at 78 °F if staying indoors, or go to the nearest air-conditioned place, such as a New York City cooling center. Also, remember to drink plenty of water. Finally, it is important to be a buddy by checking on at-risk family members, neighbors and friends to make sure they have a working air conditioner or someplace cool to go.”

“As temperatures rise, health risks for older New Yorkers increase,” said **Department for the Aging Commissioner Donna Corrado**. “During extreme heat, we recommend that older adults turn on their air conditioners or visit a cooling center to avoid heat-related illnesses. We also urge every New Yorker to check in on their vulnerable neighbors.”

“On hot summer days, it’s tempting to open a fire hydrant for heat relief, but this can negatively impact water pressure which is critical for fire operations, hindering the efforts of firefighters, endangering the lives of New Yorkers and first responders,” said **Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro**. “Visit your local firehouse to request a spray cap to be installed on your local hydrant to keep cool responsibly.”

Extreme heat is defined by temperatures that hover 10 degrees or more above the average high temperature for the region, last for prolonged periods, and are accompanied by high humidity. People living in urban areas may be at greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than people living in rural regions. The New York City Emergency Management Department urges

New Yorkers to take steps to protect themselves and help others who may be at increased risk from the heat, including older adults, people with cognitive or developmental disorders, and people who misuse drugs or alcohol or take certain medications. To raise awareness and prepare New Yorkers for extreme heat, New York City Emergency Management, in partnership with the Department for the Aging and the Health Department, will run advertisements in local print newspapers and Link NYC kiosks throughout the city. The ads feature personal preparedness tips from older New Yorkers. You can view the ads [here](#).

New Yorkers can visit nyc.gov/beattheheat to get more information about how to prepare for extreme heat and locate a cooling center. The “*Beat the Heat*” campaign is supported with updated advertising and social media engagement (#beattheheat).

The latest episode of NYC Emergency Management’s podcast highlights preparedness information for seniors and other vulnerable populations. Episode guests Linda Whitaker, assistant commissioner of emergency preparedness for DFTA, and Johanna Conroy, director of Human Services at NYC Emergency Management, outline key tips for vulnerable populations to beat the heat and provide ways New Yorkers can locate a cooling center when necessary. Listen to episode 12 on [SoundCloud](#) and [iTunes](#).

CHECK ON THOSE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO THE HEAT:

- 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 vulnerable people do not have an air conditioner or do not turn it on when they need it. Encourage them to use air conditioning. Help them get to an air-conditioned place if they cannot stay cool at home. Make sure they are drinking enough water.
- If at-risk family, friends and neighbors do not have air conditioners, encourage them to find out whether they qualify for a free one through the New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) by calling the Human Resources Administration at 1-800-692-0557 or 311.
- A small but crucial gesture can help ensure that we all have a safe and healthy summer. Get to know your neighbors, and contact neighbors and relatives – in person or by phone – at least twice a day during heat waves or extreme heat.
- Pay special attention to vulnerable friends, family, and neighbors such as older adults 65 years of age or older, the very young, and anyone with a pre-existing medical condition. New Yorkers are especially encouraged to check on older neighbors who may be isolated from friends and family.
- During extreme heat, the Department of Social Services (DSS) issues a Code Red Alert, initiating enhanced outreach efforts. During Code Red periods, shelter is available system-wide to accommodate anyone who is reasonably believed to be homeless. Homeless individuals experiencing heat-related discomfort are also able to access the designated cooling area at any shelter; and transportation to cooling centers is available via DSS outreach teams, who are out 24/7/365, checking on and engaging vulnerable clients with greater frequency.

- During extreme heat, the Department for the Aging opens senior centers as cooling centers, and home care agencies are on the lookout for clients who may need assistance. Case management agencies are also calling homebound seniors.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE HEAT:

- Stay out of the sun and avoid extreme temperature changes.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- 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 consult their physician.
- Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies. Avoid beverages containing alcohol and/or caffeine.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- 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.
- If possible, go to an air-conditioned location for several hours during the hottest parts of the day.
- 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.
- Cover all exposed skin with an SPF sunscreen (15 or above) and wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face and head.
- Never leave your children or pets in the car.

For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/health.

FACTS ABOUT HEAT ILLNESS:

Heat illness is serious. Prolonged exposure to the heat can be harmful and potentially fatal. The added stress caused by heat can also aggravate heart or lung disease even without symptoms of heat illness. The risk for getting sick during a heat wave is increased for people who:

- Do not have or do not use air conditioning.
- Are 65 years or older.
- Have chronic medical, mental health, or cognitive/developmental conditions.
- Take certain medications, which can disrupt the regulation of body temperature.
- Are confined to their beds, have limited mobility, or are unable to leave their homes.
- Are obese.
- Misuse alcohol or drugs.

Know the warning signs of heat stress. 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.

Call 911 immediately if you have, or someone you know has:

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

KEEPING YOUR PETS SAFE

- **Avoid dehydration:** Pets can dehydrate quickly, so give them plenty of fresh, clean water.
- **Exercise early and late:** When the temperature is very high, don't 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, stupor, 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.
- **Keep cats safe by installing screens in your windows:** Unscreened windows pose a real danger to cats, as they can fall out of them often during summer months.

IMPROPER FIRE HYDRANT USE:

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

Properly used "spray caps" 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 like an inconvenience, your cooperation will help to ensure that utilities are able to continue to provide uninterrupted electrical service to you and your neighbors, particularly those who are vulnerable to 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.

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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