

Beat the heat

Last updated: July 5, 2024



Beat the heat

Overheating during hot weather can harm your health and cause heat related-illnesses.

During the summer months, temperatures in British Columbia can exceed 30°C (86°F), sometimes reaching the mid to high 30's in some parts of the province. Too much heat can be harmful to your health and cause heat-related illnesses.

Learn more about heat-related illnesses and get tips on how to stay cool when it is hot outside.

Heat-related illnesses

Too much heat can be harmful to your health. Heat-related illness is the result of your body gaining heat faster than it can cool itself down. Heat-related illnesses can almost always be prevented.

If you think you have a heat-related illness, use our [Heat-related illnesses: Check your symptoms](#) tool to help make an informed decision on when to seek healthcare. For additional information, visit:

- [Heat-related illness in infants and young children \(HealthLinkBC File #35c\)](#)
- [Heat rash](#)
- [Heat syncope \(Fainting\)](#)
- [Heat-related illness \(HealthLinkBC File #35\)](#)
- [Prickly heat rash](#)
- [Safety for infants and young children during extreme heat \(HealthLinkBC File #35b\)](#)
- [Safety for the perinatal population during extreme heat \(HealthLinkBC File #35a\)](#)
- [Sunburn](#)

Heat stroke

Heat stroke is a life-threatening medical emergency. Call **9-1-1** or other emergency medical services as soon as you suspect or see the signs of heat stroke. Heat stroke signs include high body temperature, confusion, dizziness/fainting and flushed skin. Learn more about heat stroke:

- [Emergency first aid for heat stroke](#)
- [Heat stroke: Emergency symptoms](#)
- [Heat stroke prevention: What to wear](#)

Staying healthy in the heat

When it is hot outside, it can be easy to become dehydrated or suffer from a heat-related illness. Learn how you can beat the heat, to keep yourself and your family safe and healthy:

- [BC Hydro: Summer home cooling tips](#)
- [Fraser Health: Sun and heat safety](#)
- [Government of Canada: Staying healthy in the heat](#)
- [Government of Canada: Sun safety basics](#)
- [Island Health: Sun protection](#)
- [Island Health: Heat safety](#)
- [Sun safety for children \(HealthLinkBC File #26\)](#)
- [Ultraviolet radiation \(HealthLinkBC File #11\)](#)

To learn more about staying safe and healthy this summer, visit [Your health this summer](#). BC Hydro is accepting applications for [free portable air conditioners](#) for income qualified households and individuals.

Extreme heat

Extreme heat can put your health at risk, causing illness such as heat stroke or even death. It is important to take steps to protect yourself, your family, and other potentially vulnerable people in your life.

Heat events in B.C. are classified into two categories, a heat warning or an extreme heat emergency.

- A heat warning happens when conditions are very hot and there is a moderate risk to public health.
- An extreme heat emergency happens when conditions are dangerously hot and have a very high risk to public health.

[Environment and Climate Change Canada](#) distributes alerts for heat events that are a moderate or high risk to the health of the public.

Heat warning

A heat warning is when daytime and overnight temperatures are higher than usual, but they are not getting hotter every day. If there is a heat warning, you should take steps to stay cool.

Extreme heat emergency

An extreme heat emergency is when daytime and overnight temperatures get hotter every day and are well above seasonal norms. When an extreme heat warning is issued, it is time to put your emergency plan into action. Make sure you have access to cooler spaces and take steps to ensure you limit

physical activity in the heat. Check on older or vulnerable people that you know to make sure they are adequately prepared for the potentially dangerous temperatures.

[Emergency Info BC](#) is active during partial and full-scale provincial emergencies and will share verified event information.

For more information on extreme heat, visit:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Preparing for heat events](#)
- [Canadian Red Cross: Heat waves: Before, during & after](#)
- [Fraser Health Authority: Extreme heat](#)
- [Government of British Columbia: Extreme heat preparedness guide](#)
- [Government of British Columbia: Be prepared for extreme heat](#)
- [Government of Canada: Extreme heat events: Overview](#)
- [Interior Health: Extreme heat](#)
- [Northern Health: Extreme heat and heat warnings](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health: Extreme heat](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority: Heat response supports](#)

Public weather alerts for British Columbia

When severe weather threatens, Environment Canada issues alerts that notify those in the affected communities. Learn more at:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: British Columbia Heat Impacts Prediction System \(BCHIPS\)](#)
- [Government of Canada: Alerts for – Metro Vancouver](#)
- [Government of Canada: Latest heat warning – All alerts all BC](#)
- [Government of Canada: Public weather alerts for British Columbia](#)
- [Government of Canada: WeatherCAN mobile app](#)

The Province of B.C. will issue broadcast intrusive alerts through the Alert Ready System when an extreme heat emergency is declared. Learn more at Government of British Columbia: [Emergency alerts in B.C.](#)

Medications and heat

Some drugs and medications make it difficult for your body to adapt to hot temperatures. Never modify how you take your medication unless advised to by your healthcare provider. Learn more about how heat affects your body when taking medications.

- [Medications and Heat](#) (poster, PDF 451 KB)
- [Medicines that increase the chance for a heat-related illness](#)

Hot car warning

Never leave a child or pet alone in a vehicle, even for a few minutes. Leaving the car windows slightly open or "cracked" will not keep the inside of the vehicle at a safe temperature. If you come across a child or animal in distress left in a hot vehicle, call **9-1-1**. For more information, visit [Canada Safety Council: Hot car warning](#).

Workplace health and safety

When you work outdoors or indoors in environments with high temperatures such as bakeries, smelters, or restaurant kitchens, you are at risk for heat stress and other health concerns. Learn more about hot environments, how they can affect you and ways to prevent heat stress at work.

- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: Hot environments](#)
- [WorkSafeBC: Heat stress](#)

Places to keep cool

When it's too hot outside, many public places and municipal buildings can offer you a place to cool down. Local community centres, malls, pools and libraries usually have air-conditioned areas open to the public. Most communities in British Columbia have waterparks, wading pools and beaches where you can cool down. Local government websites often list community centres, fountains, libraries, swimming pools, water parks and wading pools.

If your local community is not listed, please call your local [municipality](#) or check their website to see where air-conditioned cooling centres are located. You can also [contact your local library](#) to see if they are open.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/more/resources/healthlink-bc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.