



For Immediate Release | July 12, 2021

## Interior Health heat warning reminders

IH WIDE – As heat continues to build in the Interior, temperatures will increase the potential for heat-related illnesses and are historically associated with an increase in deaths among residents.

Environment Canada has issued recent warnings for areas of Interior Health. To review special weather advisories visit, [https://weather.gc.ca/mainmenu/alert\\_menu\\_e.html](https://weather.gc.ca/mainmenu/alert_menu_e.html)

Excessive heat exposure can lead to weakness, disorientation and exhaustion. In severe cases, it can also lead to heat stroke, also known as sunstroke. Heat stroke can be a life-threatening medical emergency.

Interior Health COVID-19 vaccination clinics have plans in place to mitigate heat while waiting for immunization appointments.

Interior Health medical health officers advise that risks from extreme heat exceed risks from COVID-19. Therefore, during heat warnings:

- Anyone without access to air conditioning should find cooler indoor alternatives in order to avoid prolonged heat exposure.
- Cooling centres will be coordinated by municipalities and no one should be denied access to these centres because of concerns related to crowding or physical distancing.
- If people are wearing a mask and have difficulty breathing, they should remove the mask, whether they are indoors or outside, as wearing a mask may impact thermal regulation during heat events.

## Who is most at risk?

Anyone can suffer from heat-related illness, but some people are at greater risk. Take extra care to check on the following people regularly:

- Infants and young children, who rely on adults to monitor their environments and to provide them with enough fluid to drink;
- People who are under-housed with fewer options to avoid prolonged heat exposure;
- People 65 years or older, or anyone who needs assistance monitoring their wellbeing;
- People with heart problems and breathing difficulties;
- People who exercise or who work outside or in a hot environment.

## Symptoms to watch for?

The symptoms of heat-related illness can range from mild to severe. They include:

- Pale, cool, moist skin
- Heavy sweating
- Muscle cramps
- Rash
- Swelling, especially hands and feet
- Fatigue and weakness
- Light headedness and/or fainting

- Headache
- Nausea and/or vomiting

More severe symptoms – including high fever, hallucinations, seizures and unconsciousness – require urgent medical attention. Call 911, move to a cool place, and cool the person with water and fanning.

### **What steps can people take to avoid heat related illness?**

1. Plan your outdoor activity before 11 a.m. or after 4 p.m., to avoid the most intense sun.
2. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids. Water is the best choice.
3. Avoid physical work or exercise outside in the heat of the day.
4. If you must work or exercise outside, drink two to four cups of water each hour, even before you feel thirsty.
5. Rest breaks are important and should be taken in the shade.
6. Apply sunscreen to prevent sunburn, but remember this doesn't protect from the heat.
7. Stay in the shade, or create your own shade with lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing, a wide brimmed hat, and/or an umbrella.
8. If you're struggling to keep cool, move indoors to an air-conditioned building or take a cool bath or shower. At temperatures above 30° C (86° F), fans alone may not be able to prevent heat-related illness.
9. Never leave children or pets alone in a parked car. Temperatures can rise to 52° C (125° F) within 20 minutes inside a vehicle when the outside temperature is 34° C (93° F). Leaving the car windows slightly open will **not** keep the inside of the vehicle at a safe temperature.
10. Regularly check older adults, infants and children, anyone under-housed with fewer options to avoid heat, those doing a lot of physical activity or working outside, and people with chronic disease or mental illness for signs of heat-related illness. Make sure they are keeping cool and drinking plenty of fluids. Check on those who are unable to leave their homes, and people whose judgment may be impaired.

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### **Media, for information:**

[Media@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:Media@interiorhealth.ca)

**1-844-469-7077**