

Week of Extreme Heat Forecasted for Pennsylvania – Practice Heat Safety

DATE:	June 18, 2024
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Debra L. Bogen, MD, FAAP, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Week of Extreme Heat Forecasted for Pennsylvania – Practice Heat Safety
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	Statewide
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Advisory” that provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL

EMS COUNCILS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

FQHCs: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Summary:

- Extreme heat is forecasted for Pennsylvania from Monday, June 17 – Sunday, June 23.
- Exposure to extreme heat can cause multiple medical issues including heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Extreme heat may increase visits and calls to doctor’s offices, visits to emergency departments, urgent care centers, and hospitalizations.
- There are multiple resources provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to educate providers, patients, and the public on the health risks of extreme heat and ways to mitigate those risks.
- The National Weather Service (NWS) [HeatRisk](#) website shows the location-specific HeatRisk, which uses categories to provide recommendations for outdoor and indoor activity for the general population and sensitive populations (including infants and children, pregnant women, adults over age 65, people with disabilities, mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, substance use disorders, who are unhoused, lack access to cooling, are socially isolated, breathe polluted air, or work or engage in other strenuous activities outside).
- If you have any questions, please call DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3528) or your local health department.

Background

On June 17-23, 2024, extreme heat, with heat index values near or above 100°F, is expected for Pennsylvania. The NWS has issued a Heat Advisory for the entire state. The NWS and CDC HeatRisk is in the major (red) and extreme (magenta) categories for some parts of Pennsylvania, most frequently in the north and west, during this time period, with most areas at least in the major (red) risk category for multiple days. Exposure to extreme heat can cause multiple medical issues, especially heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and increase healthcare facility visits for heat-related illness. Medical providers in Pennsylvania should be aware of this event and ask patients about their exposures to extreme heat during medical visits over June 17-June 26.

Heat risks

Exposure to extreme heat poses many risks for people and animals. Extreme heat and humidity can make the body unable to cool itself quickly enough, potentially leading to system failures and death. Providers should be aware of the following medical issues that result from exposure to extreme heat:

Rhabdomyolysis (rhabdo) – Caused by prolonged physical exertion, often associated with heat stress. Rhabdo is the rapid breakdown and death of muscle which releases electrolytes and proteins into the bloodstream. Signs to look for include:

- muscle cramps and pain
- abnormally dark urine
- weakness
- exercise intolerance
- If left uncontrolled, rhabdo can result in irregular heart rhythms, seizures, and damage to kidneys.

Heat Exhaustion – Caused by increased stress on various parts of the body, including inadequate blood circulation due to cardiovascular insufficiency or dehydration. Signs to look for include:

- Pale, cool, moist skin
- Heavy sweating
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Increased thirst
- Fainting (heat collapse)

Heat Stroke – This is the most serious of all temperature-related disorders or conditions, and its occurrence is difficult to predict. When heat stroke occurs, temperature regulation fails and body temperature rises to critical levels. Signs to look for include:

- Red, hot, unusually dry skin
- Lack of or reduced perspiration
- Nausea
- Dizziness and confusion
- Irrational behavior
- Abnormally high body temperature
- Convulsions
- In extreme situations, coma

Recommendations

For the general public:

- Consult with a healthcare provider if you might be ill from heat exposure or contact 911 if experiencing a medical emergency.
- Stay indoors in air conditioning and out of the sun if possible.
- Drink plenty of water.

- Check on friends, family, neighbors, and pets.
- Cancel or postpone outdoor activities if possible.
- Research heat-related resources available in the community; call 211 for assistance finding community resources that may be available.
- If you must work outdoors go early or late in the day, wear light, loose-fitting clothing, take frequent breaks, and use a buddy system.

For healthcare providers:

- Be aware and ask about exposure to extreme heat during medical visits,
- Have a low threshold to evaluate all suspected heat-related illness,
- Direct patients to educational resources which provide instructions on how to avoid heat-related illness, and
- Review medication regimens with patients with consideration to their risks related to heat; adjustments to medication doses, frequency, and fluid restrictions may be made.

Additional resources

- [NWS HeatRisk \(noaa.gov\)](https://www.noaa.gov/heat-risk)
- [For Healthcare Professionals \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/heat/)
- [Extreme Heat | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/heat/)
- [Heat & Health Tracker | Tracking | NCEH | CDC](https://www.nceh.hhs.gov/heat/)
- [Extreme Heat \(pa.gov\)](https://www.pa.gov/government/health/extreme-heat)
- [Heat-Related Illness \(PA DOH\)](https://www.doh.pa.gov/health/heat-related-illness)

If you have additional questions about this guidance, please contact DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or your local health department.

Individuals interested in receiving PA-HANs are encouraged to register at [HAN Notification Registration \(mir3.com\)](https://www.mir3.com/han-notification-registration)

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of June 18, 2024 but may be modified in the future.
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