



## Talking Points: Staying Safe and Healthy During Heat Waves

This guide is for those who communicate with the public about health and environmental issues. It explains heat health risks and how to help vulnerable people and their caregivers stay safe during extreme heat.

### What you should know:

- Most New Yorkers receive warnings about heat waves, but some may not understand the dangers. It is important to communicate about who is most at risk and how to prevent heat-related illness and death.
- Heat waves are dangerous. They kill more Americans every year, on average, than any other extreme weather event. In 2006, 150 people died during a severe heat wave in New York City.
  - In New York City, most heat stroke deaths occur in homes without air conditioning.
  - Extreme heat kills more people by worsening chronic health conditions than through heat stroke.
- Those most at risk for heat illness include:
  - Adults aged 65 and older
  - People with chronic conditions including heart disease, mental illness and obesity
  - People who use drugs or drink heavily
  - People taking certain medications
- Many vulnerable New Yorkers do not have or do not use air conditioning and may stay home in dangerously hot conditions.
- Fans alone will not provide enough cooling when it is very hot outside. Without air conditioning, it can get much hotter indoors than outdoors.
- Illnesses and deaths from extreme heat are preventable. Being in an air-conditioned place is the best protection from the heat, especially for those at greatest risk of heat illness.

### What you can do:

- Monitor the weather forecast for upcoming heat waves.
- Urge vulnerable people and their caregivers to use air conditioning or go to an air conditioned place.
- Alert people at risk to talk to their health care providers about staying safe in the heat.
- Check on family, neighbors and friends to make sure they are safe and cool.
  - Encourage them to use their air conditioning, or help them get to a cool place.
  - Make sure they are drinking plenty of water.
  - Be alert for [signs of heat illness](#), and **call 911 immediately** if someone shows these signs.

### More information:

- [More information and resources on heat illness](#), New York City Health Department
- [Locations of New York City Cooling Centers](#) (open only during heating emergencies), New York City Office of Emergency Management)
- [National Weather Service](#)