

# Guide for Families July: Heat-related emergencies

## Beat the Heat!

During the summer months, prolonged exposure to heat can be harmful—and potentially fatal. New York City can be as much as 10 degrees warmer than surrounding areas. This is because so much of the city is made up of heat-trapping materials, such as asphalt, concrete, and metal. It's critical that everyone knows how to stay cool and beat the heat when temperatures rise.

These are the three main types of heat-related emergencies:

- 1. Heat Cramps**—painful muscle spasms that usually occur in the legs and abdomen.
- 2. Heat Exhaustion**—an early indicator that the body's cooling system is becoming overwhelmed. Symptoms may include weakness and exhaustion; heavy sweating; cool, moist, pale, ashen, or flushed skin; and headache, nausea, or dizziness.
- 3. Heat Stroke**—occurs when the body's systems are overwhelmed by heat and stop functioning. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition. Symptoms may include red, hot, dry skin; vomiting; or changes in consciousness.

### Plan Ahead to Stay Cool

- Before temperatures spike, check air conditioners to make sure they are working properly.
- If you don't have air conditioning, keep your windows open to allow fresh air to flow through your house.
- Install window shades or awnings to block the sun.
- Identify nearby air-conditioned locations, such as a shopping mall, library, or friend's house.
- Stay out of the sun if possible.
- Wear sunscreen and a hat.
- Check on neighbors, friends, and family. Those at greatest risk during extreme heat events include those age 65 or older, children younger than five, those with chronic medical conditions, those on medications, and those who are overweight.
- Drink water, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose clothing.
- Children and pets should never be left in parked cars, where the interior temperature can quickly rise.

Let's get ready and stay safe all summer long!



Department of Education  
Emergency Management



### Quick activities to try at home:

- Cut out three simple paper doll shapes. Label each one with the symptoms of heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or heat stroke. Display these as a reminder to watch for these symptoms during heat waves.
- Make a list of vulnerable neighbors, family members, and friends who are at risk during extreme heat. Determine the best way to check on them when temperatures are high.
- Brainstorm a list of cool places where you can beat the heat. Include libraries, shopping malls, and movie theaters. (Who says getting out of the heat can't sometimes be fun?)

When the heat index is dangerously high, New York City opens cooling centers in air-conditioned facilities. Call 311 or visit [www.NYC.gov/oem](http://www.NYC.gov/oem) to find a local cooling center.

### To Learn More:

NYC Emergency Management,  
[www.NYC.gov/emergencymanagement](http://www.NYC.gov/emergencymanagement)

NYC Emergency Management on Facebook,  
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NYC Emergency Management on Twitter,  
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Notify NYC: Register for emergency notifications by visiting [NYC.gov/notifynyc](http://NYC.gov/notifynyc), calling 311, or following @NotifyNYC on Twitter

NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene,  
[www.NYC.gov/health](http://www.NYC.gov/health)