

Tips for Staying Cool for People Experiencing Homelessness during COVID-19

Heat illnesses are preventable but must be taken seriously.

People experiencing homelessness are vulnerable to heat related illnesses. Options are limited to find somewhere to cool off, which is even more so the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here are some tips to stay cool during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Drink water before you are thirsty. Thirst is not a good indicator of how hydrated you are. Avoid alcohol and caffeine because they are dehydrating.
2. Wear breathable clothing. If you have a choice, wear light coloured clothing which does not absorb the sun's rays as much as darker coloured clothing.
3. Go inside if you can. If air conditioning is not available, avoid higher floors and try to stick to the ground floor or a basement.
4. Find shaded green space in a park. The shade can feel 5°C cooler than areas of direct sunlight.
5. Take it easy. Try to minimize activities that put extra stress on your body. This includes physical activity and substance use. Extra stress on the body increases your susceptibility to heat stroke. If you are going to use substances, don't use alone and try to avoid using during the hottest parts of the day.

What are the symptoms of heat illness?

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms during extreme heat, move to a cool place immediately and drink water:

- Dizziness or fainting
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- Extreme thirst
- Decreased urination with unusually dark yellow urine

When should I seek medical attention?

If someone has been in the heat and experiences any of the following symptoms, seek medical attention immediately. These symptoms may look the same as overdose symptoms:

- Confusion
- Faintness
- Staggering
- Hallucinations
- Unusual agitation

Learn more about extreme heat on our website <https://hpepublichealth.ca/climate-change/>.

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