

Heat Wave Response

Quick Guide for Clinicians: Assessment, Response, and Patient Counselling



Spot heat illness early

Common symptoms of heat stress:

Feeling unwell

Headaches

Weakness

Dizziness

Irritability

Tiredness

Fatigue

Excessive thirst

Sweating

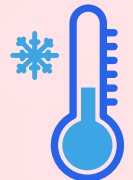
Skin feels very hot

Medical Emergency

Heat stroke signs: Rapid heart rate, body temperature $>40^{\circ}\text{C}$, not sweating, altered mental status (confusion, agitation, loss of consciousness), vomiting, seizures.



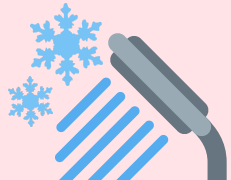
Call 911



Get to a cool place



Remove extra layers



Cool down



Stay with them



Identify those at risk

Prioritize outreach and wellness checks for patients with any of the following:

- Age or life stage:** Older adult (60+); child/youth; pregnancy
- Health & functioning:** Severe mental illness; prior heat injury; chronic conditions; reduced mobility
- Housing & access:** Unhoused; living alone; no AC/poor ventilation; limited access to water/cool spaces or limited supports
- Medications & substances:** Heat-risk meds (antipsychotics, anticholinergics, lithium); alcohol/intoxication; stimulant drugs; beta blockers; diuretics; antihistamines



When to activate heat precautions



$>25^{\circ}\text{C}$
Higher-risk populations



$>30^{\circ}\text{C}$
All exposed populations



Clinician response: 5 key steps

1. Provide education on heat illness signs/symptoms and how to respond.
2. Develop/confirm a heat wave action plan with the patient (see counselling essentials below).
3. Prescribe and advocate air conditioning/fans for those who are eligible*, e.g., patients on OW; ODSP; ACSD.
4. Increase wellness checks and supports (in-person or virtual) for higher-risk patients during heat events.
5. Be aware of medications and substances that increase heat risk, and support access to cooling.

*For eligibility details and application guidance, scan resource below



Patient counselling essentials



Reduce exposure

Plan errands for cooler times; light/loose clothing; sunscreen (SPF ≥ 15); avoid intense activity; take breaks.



Cool down

Fans alone cannot lower core body temp. Close blinds/curtains; use AC/go to a cooler place; avoid heat appliances; sleep in the coolest room; cool showers.



Hydrate

Aim 8–12 glasses/day even when not thirsty (water; cold soup/broth; high-water fruits/veg); avoid alcohol.



Stay connected

Daily check-ins; talk to a doctor; monitor heat alerts; seek urgent care/call 911 if heat stroke signs occur.



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Scan to access additional information and CAMH heat resources