



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## County Offers Tips to Stay Safe in High Heat, Humidity This Summer

**PITTSBURGH** – With high heat and humidity expected for parts of this week and throughout the rest of the summer, Allegheny County Emergency Services, the Health Department, and Human Services have joined together to provide tips and information on how residents can prepare for extreme heat, deal with it when it occurs, and what to do afterward.

Extreme heat can occur quickly and without warning, and it often results in the highest number of annual deaths nationwide among weather-related hazards. In hot conditions, evaporation is slowed, and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal temperature. High humidity increases the risk of heat-related health issues.

[Allegheny County Emergency Services](#) reminds residents that they can prepare for extreme heat in several ways, including learning the signs of heat-related illness and the ways to respond to it. Heat cramps and heat exhaustion can result in muscle pains or spasms, heavy sweating, paleness, weakness, dizziness, headache, or fainting. Anyone experiencing those symptoms should go to a cooler location, loosen or remove clothing, takes sips of cool sports drinks, and get medical help if the symptoms last more than an hour.

Signs of heat stroke include an extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees taken orally); red, hot, and dry skin with no sweat; rapid, strong pulse; dizziness; confusion; or unconsciousness. If you see those symptoms, call 9-1-1 or get the person to a hospital immediately. Cool down with whatever means necessary until medical help arrives.

Residents can also prepare for extreme heat by stocking up on food, water, and medicines; checking with their doctor to determine if changes are needed to their medicines during extreme heat; storing medicines safely at the recommended temperature; and checking that their fan(s) and/or air conditioner work well. Also, residents can look for ways to make their home cooler, including covering windows with drapes or shades, weather-stripping doors and windows, using window reflectors, adding insulation, and using attic fans.

Power failures are possible during hot weather. Be prepared by ensuring that you have a fully-charged phone, battery-operated radio, and spare batteries. Stock up on food items that do not require refrigeration or cooking and have plenty of drinking water available.

Additionally, be aware that high heat and humidity often produces pop-up storms with potential heavy downpours. Pay attention to weather daily and monitor for changes. Remember, with flooding – turn around, don't drown.

Residents should call 9-1-1 immediately from any wired or wireless phone if they are experiencing an emergency or if they see anyone else in danger.

The [Allegheny County Health Department](#) says hot weather can impact the health of anyone, regardless of age or condition, but some people are more at risk than others. People most at risk include those over age 65, babies and young children, individuals who are overweight or have medical conditions, those taking medications that may affect the way the body reacts to heat, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, individuals who work or exercise outdoors, and even those residents who may have recently arrived from cooler climates. Never leave children or pets alone in hot vehicles. Even with the windows rolled down, only minutes in a hot car can be deadly.

During extreme heat, there are plenty of ways to cope:

- Drink plenty of water, even if you're not thirsty.
- Keep yourself cool by using wet towels, putting your feet in cool water, and by taking cool showers.
- Spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings.
- Block out the sun at home during the day by closing curtains and blinds.
- Open the windows when there is a cool breeze.
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day. If you do have to go outside, wear a hat and sunscreen and seek shade.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing made from natural fibers like cotton and linen.
- Eat smaller meals more often and cold meals such as salads.
- Make sure food that needs refrigeration is properly stored.
- Avoid heavy activity like sports, renovating, and gardening.
- Watch or listen to news reports to find out more information during extreme heat.

The [Allegheny County Department of Human Services](#) reminds residents age 60 and older that they're welcome to visit any of the county-funded senior centers during regular hours of operation to socialize and enjoy activities while taking refuge from the heat. A list of all Allegheny County senior centers can be found online at [www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Older-Adults/Senior-Centers.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Older-Adults/Senior-Centers.aspx).

The Department of Human Services [Office of Area Agency on Aging](#) (AAA) also encourages residents to be particularly mindful of the elderly as the temperature rises. The agency and its contracted providers will maintain contact with frail, isolated, and high-risk seniors who are registered for care management with AAA. Care managers will respond to emergency needs as they arise, making sure that seniors are safe and stable.

However, not all elderly citizens are registered for care management with AAA and, therefore, may need to be checked on by neighbors, friends, or relatives. The following are tips offered to those who plan to check on seniors:

- Offer a glass of water or a non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverage. Sit with them as they drink it. If plain water is boring, try one of the no-calorie, fruit-flavored waters.
- Check for breathing difficulty or other signs of distress, such as swelling of the ankles or disorientation. Seek medical attention if needed, or simply call a medical professional for advice.
- Check to see that window air-conditioning units are operating in good order. If there is no air conditioning, make sure that there is good cross-ventilation aided by fans.
- Check to see that they are eating. If they are not eating because of lack of appetite, try offering light protein-laden foods, such as fully cooked eggs, cottage cheese, or lentils.

If seniors resist visits, encourage them to agree to a few phone calls each day, but pay attention to whether the person sounds alert and if they can tell you which medicines they have taken. If they are willing, invite them to stay with you for a few days until the hot weather passes.

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