

IN-PERSON Heat Health Check-Ins Overview



Introduction to Health Check-Ins During Heat Events

This information has been adopted, with permission from Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health, from the [Heat Check-In Support Framework for Non-Governmental Organizations \(2023\)](#) and National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, from [Health Checks During Extreme Heat Events](#).

Heat related illnesses (HRI) and deaths can be prevented by checking in on people during and after an extreme heat event. The risk of negative health outcomes due to heat is influenced by various factors, including:

- Being very old or very young
- Living alone or on low income
- Living without safe, stable, or adequate housing
- Experiencing health conditions, including mental health & cognitive impairment
- Impaired or decreased mobility
- Facing barriers to social connection or access to supports and services
- Certain medications (diuretics, beta-blockers, anticholinergics, and antipsychotics)
- Substance use
- No air conditioning (A/C)

What is a heat health check-in?

During a check-in, a person will visit, call, or text an individual who is at high risk due to one or more factors listed above, to ensure that they are well. The person doing the check-in completes a simple assessment of the heat level in the individual's home and their health, looking for basic signs and symptoms of heat-related illness. Anyone can complete a heat health check-in. You don't need any specialized training or medical experience.

Why are check-ins important?

Many people at risk are alone or socially isolated and may not be connected to healthcare or community programs. Outreach like check-ins can help to prevent heat-related illness and death.

What should you consider before completing heat health check-ins?

- Type of check-in (e.g., in-person or remote) and using the appropriate tool
- Check-in logistics
- If check-ins are being conducted through an agency or organization, consider training needs, scheduling, personal safety, documentation and an opportunity to debrief.
- Applicability of the [Good Samaritan Act, 2001](#)

What to bring:

- Charged cell phone for emergency calls
- Emergency contact list for the individual, if available
- Thermometer for body temperature
- Thermometer for room temperature
- This field tool
- Wash cloths or towels to soak in cool water
- Pencil/Pen/Marker
- Spray bottle
- Bottled water
- Ice packs



Field Tool for IN-PERSON Health Check-Ins During Extreme Heat Events



HRI can occur quickly. If possible, complete two health checks daily for individuals who are at-risk, with at least one check during the evening hours (note: indoor temperatures can increase in the evening, when it is starting to cool outside).

HRI occurs when the body overheats, caused by prolonged exposure to high temperatures, and worsened by high humidity. Signs and symptoms can range from mild to severe and the illness can progress rapidly.

To Complete Check in:

1. Make a plan and communicate it

- Let them know that it is a friendly wellness check
- Consider pre-scheduling arrival times

2. Arrive and make contact

- If they do not answer the door, try phoning. If no answer:
 - Notify your supervisor
 - Call their emergency contact(s)
 - Ask neighbours/landlord if they have had recent contact
- If someone is in immediate distress or cannot communicate with you, call 911

3. Visual assessment

- Observe if the person appears well or unwell
- Ask the person if they have working A/C and if they are able to use it
 - if not is there a place they can go with A/C

4. Take temperatures

- If you can, take the **indoor temperature**:
 - 26°C (78.8°F) & below is usually safe
 - Risk of HRI increases at 26°C (78.8°F) for susceptible people
 - Risk of HRI significantly increases at **31°C (87.8°F)**
- If you can, take a **body temperature**:
 - Normal = 36.5-37°C (97.7-98.6°F)
 - Above 38°C (100.4°F) may indicate moderate HRI
 - Above **39°C (102.2°F)** requires immediate medical attention

5. Check for signs and symptoms of HRI, using the checklist below

- After checking for HRI follow the cooling actions and/or emergency measures if necessary



Step 1: Mild to Moderate Heat-Related Illness

Indicate with a if the individual is experiencing any signs/symptoms from the list below. **If you select ANY of these, start cooling actions and move on to Step 2.**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Generally feeling unwell | <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual thirst, dry mouth or difficulty swallowing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm, sweaty skin | <input type="checkbox"/> Body temperature higher than 38°C (100°F) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea or vomiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling unusually tired or irritable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light-headedness, dizziness or weakness | <input type="checkbox"/> Increasing or rapid heart rate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headache | <input type="checkbox"/> Dark or reduced urine production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat rash or unusual swelling or cramps | |

If you did NOT select any, it is unlikely that the person is experiencing heat-related illness. If you feel confident that the situation is safe, let the individual know when to expect the next health check, if possible. If you feel the situation could become risky, alert the individual's emergency contact and/or the agency you are representing.

Cooling Actions (mild to moderate)

- Move the person to a cooler area, remove extra clothing, sit them up, & encourage drinking water
- Turn on A/C or open windows in different areas to create a cross-breeze
- If the indoor temperature is below 35°C, turn on a fan.
- Place cool, wet towels or ice packs around the body, especially to the neck, armpits and groin (note: avoid applying ice packs or ice directly on exposed skin)

Call 911 if symptoms continue or get worse.

Step 2: Severe Heat-Related Illness

Indicate with a if the individual is experiencing any of the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fainting or loss of consciousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid breathing and faint, rapid heart rate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot flushed skin or very pale skin | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual confusion or disorientation | <input type="checkbox"/> Body temp higher than 39°C (102°F) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual coordination issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Severe nausea and vomiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low output of dark urine |

If you are unsure if the person is experiencing severe heat-related illness, the safest approach is to treat it like a life-threatening emergency, call 911, and begin emergency measures below.

EMERGENCY MEASURES (severe)

- **CALL 911 immediately**
- Stay with the person until medical assistance arrives
- If possible, move to a cooler area
- Remove excess clothing
- Have the person lie on their back or in a semi-upright position
- Apply cool, wet towels or ice packs around the body, especially to the neck, armpits and groin (note: avoid applying ice packs or ice directly on exposed skin)