

## How Heat Impacts Children's Health

Vermont data indicates that heat-related illnesses increase when outdoor temperatures reach the mid- to upper-80s, with impacts getting progressively worse as temperatures rise into the 90s. Humid conditions make the temperature feel even hotter. Impacts can occur at even lower temperatures for anyone not already acclimated to hot weather, especially in the spring.

Children are generally at higher risk for heat illnesses because their bodies warm up faster than adults, they have less sweating capacity than adults, and they may have less awareness of and ability to manage heat risks. Young/small children and children with underlying health conditions are typically at highest risk.

Indoor temperatures above 80°F can result in reduced concentration, impaired academic performance, an increase in behavioral issues, increased risk of asthma attacks, and other health problems.

## Symptoms and First Aid

Muscle cramps, heavy sweating, nausea, headache or light-headedness may all indicate a heat-related illness. Most heat-related illnesses can be treated with fluids and by resting in a cooler place. If symptoms persist or get worse, or someone you are with seems confused or loses consciousness, dial 9-1-1 and get immediate medical help. Learn more about [symptoms and first aid](#).

## What to do before the heat season

Consider these preparedness strategies:

- Adopt a Heat Annex to your Emergency Operations Plan or find another way to document hot weather policies and procedures. Use the [HeatReady School Scorecard](#) planning tool from Arizona State University to support your efforts.
- Make sure that staff are familiar with [symptoms of heat-related illnesses and first aid responses](#) and strategies for supporting heat and sun safety.
- Have an emergency plan in place for providing medical attention in the event of a serious heat-related illness.
- Have a plan for monitoring children at higher risk to make sure they stay cool and hydrated.
- Make sure that air conditioning or other cooling systems are in place and functioning. Install or update cooling equipment if feasible.
- Use environmental cooling strategies outdoors, such as planting trees, installing shade structures, or providing access to hoses/misters or other water resources.

## What to do when hot weather is in the forecast

Consider these safety strategies:

- Communicate with parents about upcoming heat risks, how they can support student heat and sun safety, and planned or possible changes for the school day or after-school activities.
- Talk to students about heat and sun safety. Provide guidance and assistance with hydration, appropriate clothing, skin protection and other strategies for staying cool.
- Provide or make sure students have easy access to water, ice and cool spaces.
- Modify, limit or cancel outdoor and physical activity on hot days.
  - Provide frequent rest and hydration breaks.
  - Take extra precautions while students acclimate to activity in hot weather.
  - **Child care providers** should follow the [Child Care Weather Watch](#) guidance, as recommended by the Department for Children and Families.
  - **Schools** should follow the Vermont Principals' Association [Hot Weather Policy](#) for athletic activities.

## What to do if there is not adequate air conditioning

Consider these strategies:

- Turn off lights, electronic equipment, and other heat-generating equipment, if practical.
- Use light-colored window shades to keep out sun and absorb heat. If windows can't be covered, try rearranging the room to keep everyone out of direct sun.
  - Opening shades at night helps release indoor heat.
- Use window fans to blow in cool air and vent out warm air when the temperature outside is cooler or similar to inside.
  - If outdoor air quality is poor or humidity is very high, it may be better to keep windows closed.
  - If possible, keep windows open overnight to help cool the building.
- Inside the classroom, point fans directly at occupants to provide a cooling benefit. Fans become ineffective when indoor temperatures reach the mid-to-upper 90s.
- Try to keep indoor relative humidity below 60%. Close windows and run a dehumidifier to reduce indoor humidity. Consider keeping windows closed when outdoor humidity is very high.
- Consider making modifications to scheduled activity plans to help reduce behavioral and learning challenges in hot classrooms.
- If a room becomes too hot to occupy, move to a shaded outdoor location or to a cooler indoor location, if possible. Basements and lower floors will stay cooler than upper floors. If cooled space is limited, rotate students through cooler spaces throughout the day.

- Close the facility or end early if indoor temperatures are too hot for safety or for continued learning.
  - For **child care providers**, the [Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations](#) for both [center-based](#) and [licensed home-based programs](#) state that the maximum allowable temperature in a room used by children is 85 °F.

## More Information and Resources

- [Heat safety tips](#) available in printable PDFs in Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, English, French, Karen, Kirundi, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese
- [Managing Extreme Heat, Recommendations for Schools](#) (Arizona Department of Health Services)
- [HeatReady Schools Toolkit](#) (Arizona State University)

## Follow heat hazard forecasts

- [Excessive Heat Awareness and Safety](#) (National Weather Service (NWS))
- [Hazardous Weather Outlook](#) (NWS)
- [HeatRisk Forecast Tool](#) (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention)

## Stay Informed

Subscribe to:

- [Vermont Alert](#) for notifications by text, phone or email when NWS issues a heat-related weather advisory (make sure to select “heat alerts” from the list of subscription options)
- [Department of Public Safety weather alerts](#)

## Questions?

Call the Vermont Department of Health/Environmental Health at 802-863-7220, extension 0, or email [ClimateHealth@vermont.gov](mailto:ClimateHealth@vermont.gov).