



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Michelle Morse, MD, MPH
Acting Commissioner

2025 Health Advisory #9 Help Prevent Heat-Related Illness and Death

Please distribute to all clinical staff in primary care, family medicine, geriatrics, internal medicine, psychiatry, pharmacy and emergency medicine.

- Air Conditioning (AC) is the most effective protection during a heat wave but owning and using AC can be a financial burden.
- Most who die from heat-related illness do not have or use AC and are exposed to heat in their homes.
- Refer people without an AC, if they [are eligible](#), to apply for a free one through the [Home Energy Assistance Program](#). Applications open **April 15. Apply as soon as it opens because funding often runs out.**
- Guide people who do not have or use an AC (e.g., due to energy costs) to visit family, friends, or neighbors even for a couple of hours to stay cool when their home is too hot.
- For people who may use [medications that can impair thermoregulation or cause dehydration](#) or who have health conditions sensitive to fluid balance, adjust medication regimens as needed on hot days and recommend self-monitoring of hydration.

April 14, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Hot weather is increasing in severity and frequency due to climate change and kills more New Yorkers, on average, than any other extreme weather event. Hot weather predisposes people to hyperthermia (heat stress) and exacerbates existing medical and mental health conditions. Most who die from heat-related illness do not have or use air conditioners (ACs) and are exposed to heat in their homes. AC is the most effective protection during a heat wave but owning and using an AC can be a financial burden. Structural racism acts through multiple pathways to place Black New Yorkers at greater risk, with a heat stress death rate twice that of White New Yorkers.

Guidance for engaging with people at greatest risk of heat illness and death

- **PLAN:** Remind people that hot weather—not only heat waves—can be dangerous. Encourage them to monitor [weather alerts](#) and have a plan to stay cool and well-hydrated.
- **RISK:** Identify people at increased risk for heat-related illness (see [“Factors that Increase Risk”](#)).
- **AIR CONDITIONING:** Encourage people to use ACs if they have them. Suggest setting an AC to a safe 78 degrees or “low” cool to provide comfort, save on electricity costs, and conserve energy.

Refer people without an AC, if they [are eligible](#), to apply for a free one through the [Home Energy Assistance Program](#). Applications open **April 15**. Funding for this program runs out quickly, **apply as early as possible**. This funding may also be impacted by changes to federal agencies and grant dollars, which is another reason to advise people to apply early.

- **STAY COOL:** Guide people who don't have or use AC (e.g., due to energy costs) to visit family, friends, or neighbors even for a couple of hours to stay cool when their home is too hot. During a heat wave, they can call 311 or go to maps.nyc.gov/oem/cc to find a cooling center.
- **BE A BUDDY:** Engage people to call and check on friends, family, and neighbors during hot weather.
- **MANAGEMENT:** Talk with people who are high risk about how best to manage their conditions and protect themselves from heat-related illness or death. For people who may use [medications that can impair thermoregulation or cause dehydration](#), or who have health conditions sensitive to fluid balance, adjust medication regimens as needed on hot days and recommend self-monitoring of hydration.
- **EMERGENCY:** Discuss the [signs and symptoms of heat-related illness](#), including guidance on when to call 911, and the risk of exacerbating chronic conditions with people and their caregivers.
- **IMMEDIATELY REPORT** deaths where heat exposure is suspected as a direct or contributing cause to the New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner at 212-447-2030.

Thank you for your continued dedication to protecting the health of New Yorkers.

Carolyn Olson

Carolyn Olson, MPH
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and
Policy

Madhury Ray

Madhury Ray, MD, MPH, CEM
Director, Child Care Data Analytics
Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and
Policy