NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Acting Commissioner

2025 Health Alert #3:
Protect People at Risk of Heat-Related Death During Extreme Heat

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

- 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 ACs and are exposed to heat in their homes.
- Guide people who do not 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.
- 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.

July 23, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

New York City is under a heat advisory **Friday (July 25, 2025) 11:00 AM to 8:00PM** with the heat index forecasted to reach up to 105 degrees. Cooling centers will be open. **Hot temperatures will continue next week**, with forecasted heat indices of 94 degrees on Sunday (July 27), 95 on Monday, 100 on Tuesday and 94 on Wednesday.

Extreme heat is the deadliest of all extreme weather, and climate change is making NYC summers hotter. More than 500 New Yorkers die prematurely from heat every summer. Heat can cause hyperthermia and worsen existing medical conditions and mental health problems. Structural racism and the resulting social and economic inequities increase the risk of heat stress for Black New Yorkers, who are twice as likely to die from heat than White New Yorkers. Most people who die of heat stroke in New York City did not have or use air conditioners and were overcome by heat in their homes. Fans do not provide sufficient cooling.

- Remind people to use AC during extreme heat and limit outdoor activity. Suggest setting ACs to 78°F or “low cool” to provide comfort, save on electricity bills, and conserve energy.
- Encourage people who do not have or use AC to visit others with AC or a cooling center, even for a few hours. Call 311 or go to maps.nyc.gov/oem/cc to find a cooling center.
- Remind people to be careful leaving cool spaces if they are returning to a hot environment and to continue seeking cool spaces after the heat advisory ends, as un-air-conditioned homes can remain dangerously hot for days after outdoor temperatures drop.

- Review medications that may impact thermoregulation with people.
- Engage people to call or check on family and friends/neighbors about staying cool.
- Discuss symptoms of heat-related illness and exacerbating chronic health conditions and advise increased fluid intake when medically appropriate.
- 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.

People at greatest risk do not have or use AC and have one or more of the following factors:

- Chronic health conditions (cardiovascular/renal disease, respiratory conditions, diabetes).
- Mental health conditions including but not limited to depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia.
- Dementia, cognitive difficulty, difficulty with self-care, or difficulty thermoregulating.
- Use of diuretics, anticholinergics, psychotropics, or medications affecting thermoregulation.
- Use drugs or drink heavily, which can increase core body temperature, decrease a person's ability to regulate their body temperature, increase the risk of dehydration, and/or mask symptoms of overheating.
- Socially isolated or with limited mobility.
- Older adults (age ≥ 60) are more likely to have one or more of the factors above.

Sincerely,

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