

39.1. Extreme Heat

Extreme heat weather events involve high temperatures and sometimes high humidity. Extreme heat can have negative impacts on your health. Heat related illness can affect you quickly and can lead to long-term health problems and even death. Heat related illness can include:

- Heat edema (swelling of hands, feet, ankles)
- Heat rash
- Heat cramps (muscle cramps)
- Heat fainting
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke

While extreme heat can put everyone at risk for heat illness, the risks are greatest for:

- Older adults
- Infants and young children
- People with chronic illnesses (eg. breathing problems, heart problems, mental illness)
- People with mobility challenges
- People who take certain kinds of medications (check with your doctor or pharmacist)
- People who work in the heat
- People who are homeless
- People with low incomes
- People who live alone

Emergency Drills:

A review of the Extreme Heat policy and guidelines will be held at least once a year and documented on the Emergency Drills Record (see Policy #34: Emergency Preparedness). Emergency supplies should be checked at this time and replenished if necessary.

Extreme Heat Policy:

- (a) Each Spectrum home and program site shall be equipped with emergency supplies to ensure the safety of individuals and personnel during extreme heat events. The emergency supplies shall include:
 - First aid kit
 - Bottled water
 - Fans or portable air conditioning units
 - Sunscreen
- (b) The Society will provide written updates via the Spectrum website when extreme heat is forecasted. Spectrum personnel will be expected to read and follow these updates and any public health advisories.
- (c) The Supervisor will be responsible for assessing risks associated with household activities and outings and identifying strategies to mitigate the risks, including postponing or cancelling activities if necessary to ensure the safety of individuals and staff.

- (d) The Supervisor will be responsible for checking in with individuals and their primary contacts to ensure that individuals have the necessary support to stay safe during an extreme heat event. For some, this may include having family or friends check in on the person or arranging for temporary shelter if the individual's living situation does not provide adequate protection from the heat. The Supervisor will notify the Coordinator or HR if additional support is needed.
- (e) All personnel will be responsible for assisting individuals to stay safe during an extreme heat event. Guidelines for staying safe in extreme heat:
- Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty
 - Take a cool bath or shower, or soak your feet in cool water
 - Set up fans or portable air conditioning units
 - Make sure thermostats are turned DOWN
 - Close curtains and blinds to block the sunlight
 - Find spaces to cool down – shade, swimming pool, air conditioned public spaces
 - Wear light, loose-fitting clothing
 - Reduce physical activity, and take plenty of breaks
 - Plan activity in the early morning or evening if possible
 - Use sunscreen and wear a hat when going outside to avoid sunburn or heat stroke, and take a water bottle with you
 - Check local news and weather forecasts for updates
- (f) All personnel will be responsible for monitoring individuals for symptoms of heat illness, which include:
- Dizziness or fainting
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Headache
 - Rapid breathing and heartbeat
 - Extreme thirst (dry mouth, sticky saliva)
 - Decreased urination with unusually dark yellow urine
 - Behavioural changes

Any symptoms of heat illness should be treated as a medical emergency.