



Health  
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# Keep children cool!

Protect Your Child from Extreme Heat



Children are at risk

Prepare for extreme heat

Watch your child's health closely

Keep your child hydrated

Keep your child cool

Avoid exposing your child to extreme heat

Canada

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## Children are at risk

Extreme heat can be dangerous for all children, especially for infants and young children.

**Heat illnesses** include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat fainting, heat edema (swelling of the hands, feet and ankles), heat rash (prickly heat) and heat cramps (muscle cramps). They are mainly caused by over-exposure to heat or over-exertion in the heat, and if not prevented, can lead to long-term health problems and even death.

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## Protect Your Child from Extreme Heat



## Prepare for extreme heat

**Stay informed** about local weather forecasts and alerts so you know when to take extra care.

If you have an air conditioner, make sure it works properly before the hot weather starts. Otherwise, find an air-conditioned spot near you that you can use to cool off for a few hours during extreme heat.

Learn about ways to keep your home cool during the summer. For example, if you live in a house, plant trees on the side where the sun hits the house during the hottest part of the day.

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## Watch your child's health closely

Stay alert for symptoms of heat illness.

They include:

- changes in behaviour (sleepiness or temper tantrums);
- dizziness or fainting;
- nausea or vomiting;
- headache;
- rapid breathing and heartbeat;
- extreme thirst; and
- decreased urination with unusually dark yellow urine.

If you see any of these signs during extreme heat, **immediately** move the child to a cool place and give liquids. Water is best. If you are breastfeeding your child, breast milk will provide adequate hydration, but remember to keep yourself hydrated so you can produce a sufficient amount of milk.

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**Heat stroke is a medical emergency! Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately** if you are caring for a child who has a high body temperature and is unconscious, confused or has stopped sweating.

While waiting for help – **cool the child right away by:**

- moving them to a cool place;
- applying cold water to large areas of the skin or clothing; and
- fanning the child as much as possible.

Children most at risk include those with breathing difficulties (asthma), heart conditions, kidney problems, mental and physical disabilities, developmental disorders, diarrhea, and those who take certain medications. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if the medication increases risk to your child's health in the heat and follow their recommendations.

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## Keep your child hydrated

**Dehydration is dangerous.** Give plenty of cool liquids to drink, especially water, **before your child feels thirsty.**



Make it fun—Leave a colourful glass by the sink and remind your child to drink after every hand washing.



Make it tasty—Flavouring water with natural fruit juice may make it more appealing.



Make it healthy—Provide extra fruits and vegetables as they have a high water content.



Make it routine—Encourage your child to drink water before and after physical activity.

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## Keep your child cool

Dress your child in loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing made from a breathable fabric.

### Keep your home cool

- If you have an air conditioner with a thermostat, keep it set to the highest setting that is comfortable (somewhere between 22°C/72°F and 26°C/79°F), which will reduce your energy costs and provide needed relief. If you are using a window air conditioner, cool only one room where you can go for heat relief.
- Prepare meals that don't need to be cooked in your oven.
- Block the sun by closing awnings, curtains or blinds during the day.
- If safe, open your windows at night to let cooler air into your home.



### If your home is extremely hot:

- **Take a break from the heat** and spend a few hours with your child in a cool place. It could be a tree-shaded area, swimming facility, spray pad or an air-conditioned spot such as a shopping mall, grocery store or public library.
- **Bathe your child in a cool bath** until your child feels refreshed. Always supervise your child in the bath.
- **If using a fan**, keep it at a safe distance from the child and aim the air flow in their direction.

Keep your child cool

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## Avoid exposing your child to extreme heat

### Reschedule or find alternatives

Reschedule or plan outdoor activities during cooler parts of the day.

- Before heading out, check the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) in your area, if available – children are more sensitive to air pollution, which tends to be at higher levels during extreme heat.
- If you are in an area where mosquitoes are active, protect uncovered skin with insect repellent and follow the manufacturer's directions.

**Never** leave children inside a parked vehicle or in direct sunlight.

- When outside air temperature is 23°C/73°F, the temperature inside a vehicle can be extremely dangerous – more than 50°C/122°F.



### Avoid sun exposure

Keep your child in the shade or protected from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed, breathable hat or shade them with an umbrella.

- Tree-shaded areas could be as much as 5°C/9°F cooler than the surrounding area.
- If sun exposure can't be avoided, use sunscreen that is SPF 15 or higher and follow the manufacturer's directions.  
**Remember, sunscreen will protect against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays but not from the heat.**
  - Don't apply sunscreen to a child less than 6 months old.
  - Sunscreen and insect repellents can be used safely together. Apply the sunscreen first, then the insect repellent.



## Additional Resources

Health Canada's

**"Babies, children and sun safety"**

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/sun-sol/babies\\_child-bebes\\_enfant-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/sun-sol/babies_child-bebes_enfant-eng.php)

Health Canada's

**"Is your child safe?"**

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/index-eng.php)

Health Canada's

**"It's Your Health – Insect Repellents"**

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/insect-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/insect-eng.php)

Health Canada and Environment Canada's

**"Air Quality Health Index"**

[www.airhealth.ca](http://www.airhealth.ca)



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