



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
08.26.2024

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Ongoing heat wave causes public health concerns

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – A period of extreme heat continues to build across West Michigan through Tuesday, when the combination of 90°F temperatures and high humidity levels could make the air feel 100°F or hotter. With not much relief in store after dark either, the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department wants to share important reminders about prioritizing and protecting health.

“Summer can be a challenging time for members of our community who are more sensitive to sharp temperature shifts, including older adults, children, people with respiratory illnesses such as asthma, and people without access to air conditioning,” Health Officer Jim Rutherford said. “We encourage everyone to learn the signs of heat-related illness, and to check in on their high-risk neighbors, family, and friends.”

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are both forms of heat-related illness. [Signs of heat-related illness](#) vary but often include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, fainting, and an extremely high body temperature (above 103°F). Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness and can result in permanent disability or death if the person does not receive immediate emergency treatment.

Health officials encourage community members to follow the additional guidelines below until the heat wave subsides:

Stay in an air-conditioned place as much as possible.

- If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the mall or public library for a few hours.
- [Call 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898-211](#) to learn about cooling locations available near you.
- Use your stove and oven less to maintain a cooler temperature in your home.
- Take a cool shower or bath to cool off.

Limit time spent outdoors to when it's coolest in the morning and evening, and dress appropriately.

- Choose lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.
- Rest often in shady areas so that your body has a chance to recover.
- Cut down on exercise during the heat.
- Wear sunscreen, as sunburn affects a body's ability to cool down.

Do not leave kids or anyone else in vehicles.

- **Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car**, even if the windows are cracked open.

- When leaving your vehicle, check to be sure no one is left behind. Do not overlook any children who have fallen asleep in the car.

Always supervise children who are cooling off in or near a pool or other body of water.

- Drowning is a leading cause of death for children 1 to 4 years old, and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children 5 to 14 years old.
- Drowning can happen in seconds and is often silent.
- Designate a responsible adult to supervise closely and constantly when children are in or near water, including bathtubs.
- Adults watching kids in or near water should avoid distracting activities like reading, using the phone, and consuming alcohol or drugs.

Be on the lookout for harmful algal blooms (HABs).

- Summer is the peak season for the formation of [HABs that can present health hazards](#) to people and pets.
- HABs typically occur during periods of warm temperatures, lots of sun, and high nutrient levels.
- It is not possible to determine whether algal blooms contain harmful toxins by looking at them, so it is best to avoid contact with areas that are covered with algae or scum within a body of water.
- Suspicious-looking algae can be reported to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy by calling the Environmental Assistance Center at 1-800-662-9278 or sending an email to AlgaeBloom@Michigan.gov.

Keep your family, your pets, and yourself hydrated.

- Drink more water than usual, regardless of how active you are. Don't wait until you're thirsty.
- Stay away from sugary or alcoholic drinks, as these can cause you to lose more body fluid.
- Avoid very cold drinks because they can cause stomach cramps.

Stay weather-aware.

- Follow your local [National Weather Service](#) office and favorite news stations for extreme heat alerts and safety tips.

For more information about how to protect yourself and your loved ones from heat-related illness, see the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Heat Awareness and Safety Fact Sheet](#).

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