OASH | Office of Climate Change and Health Equity

2024 HHS Resources on Heat and Health

Extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the U.S. 2023 was the warmest year on record, with heat-related illness affecting communities across the country. Planning, education, and action can help prevent heat-related health harms[1].

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of information and resources from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and federal partners to support frontline healthcare providers, public health practitioners, and human services providers in protecting those at risk of heat-related illness.

Assistance programs

- Administration for Children and Families (ACF): The **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** provides federal funds to reduce the costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization, and minor energy-related home repairs. To find their local LIHEAP office and to access benefits, households should visit energyhelp.us or call the National Energy Assistance Referral hotline at 1-866-674-6327.
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS): Section 1115 demonstrations and waiver authorities in section 1915 of the Social Security Act are vehicles states can use to test new or existing ways to deliver and pay for health care services in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). **Medicaid 1115 demonstration waivers** are being used to address health-related social needs, including, in some states, air conditioners and air filters.
- Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OCCHE): The online resource **Protecting Vulnerable Patient Populations from Climate Hazards: A Referral Guide for Health Professionals** informs patient education and referrals in clinical settings.
- Finding and accessing resources for **cooling centers** differs at the state and county level. Calling or visiting the website of a state's 2-1-1 program (a guide to local community services) can connect individuals with resources for extreme heat, including Extreme Heat Cooling Programs. Find cooling centers by state.

Clinical and educational resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): The newly developed **CDC clinical Guidance** helps clinicians keep at-risk individuals safe when temperatures rise. The CDC also has resource pages for additional vulnerable populations, including individuals with chronic medical conditions, individuals with low income, and older adults.
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): **Workplace Safety and Health Topics–Heat Stress** is a resource page for preventing heat-related illness in workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments. Information focused on heat stress in the workplace can be found on the NIOSH Science Blog and information for pregnant workers can be found here.

1 HEAT.gov - National Integrated Heat Health Information System

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- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS): The Building Blocks for a Heat Stress Prevention Training Program is a resource for identifying and implementing steps needed to reduce the risk of heat stress for workers in indoor and outdoor environments.
- National Institutes of Health (NIH): **Hot Weather Safety for Older Adults** is a resource page with information about heat-related illness and protective tips for older adults.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA): **Tips for People Who Take Medication** is a publication that explores the mental health impacts of climate change, how heat might affect those taking medications that impair thermoregulation, and tips for building resilience.

Data tools to inform counseling of at-risk individuals

- The **National Weather Service (NWS) HeatRisk Forecast Tool**, created in partnership by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and CDC, is a color-numeric-based index that provides a seven-day heat forecast nationwide, identifying when temperatures may reach levels that could harm health.
- From the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and NIOSH, the **OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool App** is a resource for planning outdoor work activities based on how hot it feels throughout the day. It has a real-time, location-specific heat index and hourly forecasts, and provides occupational safety and health recommendations.
- The OCCHE **Climate and Health Outlook Portal** is an interactive component of the Climate and Health Outlook, which is a monthly publication that provides a climate forecast and resources to take proactive action. The Portal features interactive maps with county-level heat, wildfire, and drought forecasts for the current month. It also includes county-level data on individual risk factors that may increase vulnerability to negative health outcomes from these climate hazards.
- The **Heat & Health Index (HHI)** helps communities prepare for heat and prevent heat-related illness and deaths. The HHI is the first nationwide tool to provide heat-related illness data at the ZIP-code level, helping state and local officials identify areas most likely to experience negative health outcomes from heat and take steps to increase resilience.

Additional tools and resources:

- HEAT.gov serves as the premier source of heat and health information for the nation to reduce the health, economic, and infrastructural impacts of extreme heat.
- CDC webpages, including Natural Disasters and Severe Weather–Extreme Heat and Keep Your Cool in Hot Weather!, provide information and resources about heat-related illness and how to stay cool and safe in hot weather.
- The CDC Heat & Health Tracker provides local heat and health information so communities can prepare for and respond to extreme heat events.
- The Heat-Related EMS Activation Surveillance Dashboard (EMS HeatTracker), created in partnership between OCCHE and the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), uses nationally submitted Emergency Medical Services (EMS) data to track EMS responses to people experiencing heat-related emergencies in the pre-hospital setting.
- The Extreme Heat Vulnerability Mapping Tool overlays NOAA's projected heat events from 2020 to 2090 with CDC's 2018 Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to help locate counties that will be most vulnerable to heat events in the coming decades.