



Summer Heat

Keeping children safe while in your care

Now is the time for child care providers to review summer plans for sun exposure, mosquitos and ticks, water sports and high temperatures. **This article focuses on high temperatures.**

Why is extreme heat important?

Extreme heat can be dangerous for all children but especially infants and young children. Over-exposure to heat or over-exertion in the heat can cause a variety of symptoms and can even be fatal. Symptoms include changes in behaviour (sleepiness or temper tantrums), dizziness or fainting, nausea or vomiting, headache, fast breathing and heartbeat, extreme thirst and decreased urination with unusually dark yellow urine. Heat can also cause swelling of the hands, feet and ankles, heat rash (prickly heat) and muscle cramps. The most serious situation is heat stroke with its symptoms of high body temperature, seizures confusion or unconsciousness, and red, hot, dry skin.

Here are some tips to prevent, recognize and respond to hot weather – related problems.

1. Prepare for hot weather

- Create and/or update your heat response plan and provide training to staff to make sure that they know what to do to protect the health of the children and themselves during heat alerts ([See the Child Care Licensing Regulation 22 \(1\)\(b\)](#)).
- To find out more information on how to be prepared for an extreme heat event, download the [Extreme Heat Guide](#).
- Prepare staff to recognize the [signs of heat illness](#) and know when it is an emergency.
- Know where to get information on heat alerts.
 - [Public Weather Alerts for British Columbia](#)
 - [WeatherCan App](#)
- Monitor indoor temperatures – inside temperatures of 31°C or higher are considered extreme.

2. Keep your childcare facility cool. Some examples include:

- If the building has air conditioning, make sure it works properly before the hot weather starts.
- If the entire facility cannot be cooled, consider creating a specific cooling room where children can cool off for a few hours on hot days.



- Planting trees on the side of the building where the sun hits during the hottest part of the day can reduce the temperature by as much as 5°C.
- Block the sun by closing awnings, curtains or blinds during the day.
- Install exterior window shading or glazing to reduce sun penetration into the indoor space.
- Open windows at night to let in cooler air.

3. Keep children cool

- Dress children in loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing made from a breathable fabric.
- Keep children in the shade and have them wear wide-brimmed, breathable hats.
- Plan outdoor activities for cooler parts of the day or move them to cooler indoor places.
- Do not rely solely on fans at higher temperatures (~ 30 °C). If you are using a fan, keep it at a safe distance from the children and aim the air flow in their direction. Apply cool water mist or wet towels to the body before sitting in front of a fan.
- Never leave children inside a vehicle. When the outside air temperature is 23°C, the temperature inside a vehicle can be more than 50°C which is extremely dangerous.
- If your childcare facility is too hot, take the children to a cool place for at least a few hours each day.

4. Keep the children hydrated

- Give the children plenty of cool liquids, especially water, even before they tell you they are thirsty.

5. Watch the children closely

- Children most at risk of heat-related health problems include those with breathing difficulties (asthma), heart conditions, kidney problems, mental and physical disabilities, developmental disorders and diarrhea. Ask the parents of children who are taking medications to ask their doctors or pharmacists if their medications increase the risk of heat-related problems and, if so, what to do about it.

6. Respond quickly if you see problems

- Stay alert for symptoms of heat illness.
- If you see any of these signs, immediately move the child to a cool place and give the child some water to drink

Heat stroke is a medical emergency! If one of the children in your care has a high body temperature and is confused, unconscious or has stopped sweating, call 911 immediately. While waiting for help, cool the child by moving him/her to a cool place, applying cold water to large areas of the skin or clothing and fanning the child as much as possible.

7. Other Health and Safety Considerations

- Sun exposure – If sun exposure can't be avoided, protect children with wide-brimmed, breathable hats and a sunscreen that is SPF 30 or higher. Sunscreen will protect against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays but not from the heat. Don't apply sunscreen to a child less than six months of age. Sunscreen and insect repellents can be used safely together. Apply the sunscreen first then the insect repellent. Just remember you need parents' consent to apply sunscreen and insect repellent. For more information visit [HealthLinkBC](#).
- Mosquitoes and ticks – If you are in an area where mosquitoes are active and/or ticks are present, cover up and protect uncovered skin with [insect repellent](#) and follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Air quality - Before heading out, check the [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#). Children are more sensitive to air pollution which tends to be worse during extreme heat. For more information review [A Guide to Air Quality and Your Health](#).

If you have any questions, contact publichealthlicensing@northernhealth.ca or visit the [Northern Health](#) website.