

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

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**ADVISORY**

To: Recreational Camp and Program Operators

From: Steven Hughes, Director, Community Sanitation Program

Date: June 22, 2023  
Re: Heat-Related Illness and Preventative Measures for Recreational Camp and Program Operators

Many summer recreational camps for children offer outdoor activities which may involve strenuous physical exercise performed during the extreme heat and humidity. As a result, many people including young and healthy children, can be at risk of heat-related illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers guidance on preventing heat-related illness, which can be found [here](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.html). Camp and program operators should review and implement these preventive measures to protect all campers, staff, and volunteers from heat-related illnesses and take steps to:

* Limit your outdoor activities to the coolest part of the day, like the morning and evening hours;
* Stay hydrated and ensure water is available at all times;
* Encourage everyone to wear appropriate lightweight and loose-fitting clothing;
* Always use sunscreen;
* Rest more often in shady or indoor areas; and
* Monitor those at increased risk for heat-related illnesses.

Heat-related illnesses include heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Camp and program operators are encouraged to learn the warning signs and treatment recommendations based on the severity and type of heat-related illness. Unrecognized or untreated heat-related illness can result in adverse health conditions including, in extreme cases, death.

Listed below are further details on the signs and symptoms of the different types of heat-related illness, and what you should do if you see someone in distress from the heat. Additional information is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/warning.html>

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| **Signs of Heat Cramps:** | **You Should:** | **Go to the Hospital if:** |
| * Heavy sweating | * ***Give them water or sports drink*** | * The person has a history of heart problems |
| * Muscle pain or spasms | * Tell them to stop exerting themselves | * Cramps last longer than 1 hour |
|  | * Have them wait for cramps to go away | * The person is on a low sodium diet |

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| **Signs of Heat Exhaustion:** | **You Should:** | **Go to the Hospital if:** |
| * Lots of sweating | * ***Give them water*** | * The person is throwing up |
| * Fast/weak pulse | * Move them to a cool place | * The person is getting worse |
| * Nausea/vomiting | * Loosen their clothes | * Symptoms last longer than 1 hour |
| * Headache/dizziness | * Apply cool wet towels or cloths on the person |  |
| * Fainting |  |  |
| * Muscle cramps |  |  |
| * Cold, pale clammy skin |  |  |
| **Signs of Heat Stroke:** | **You Should:** |  |
| * Fast strong pulse | * **CALL 911 – this is a medical emergency.** |  |
| * High body temperature (above 103⁰F) | * Apply cool cloths to the person |  |
| * Confusion | * Move them to a cool place |  |
| * Dizziness | * Wait until clearance from a medical professional BEFORE you give them anything to drink |  |
| * Red, hot, dry or damp skin |  |  |
| * Headache |  |  |
| * Losing consciousness |  |  |

The Department of Public Health’s Community Sanitation Program recommends this information be shared with all camp or program staff and volunteers, including the on-site Health Care Supervisor(s). As always, thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this important public health matter.