

Heat Alert Guidelines for Child Care Centres

The Medical Officer of Health issues a Heat Alert when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The forecast is showing a humidex advising of 40°Celsius or higher.
- The humidex is forecast to rise to 36°Celsius or higher, combined with an Environment Canada Smog Alert.
- Environment Canada issues a humidex warning for outdoor activity for people in the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark area.
- High temperatures without a humidex reading equal 38°Celsius or above.

Recommendations

1. Establish both a policy and plan to deal with extreme temperatures.
2. Staff should be aware of signs and symptoms of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Follow first aid procedures promptly.
3. Staff should role model appropriate sun safety behaviours for children.
4. Ensure indoor temperatures are comfortable; offer regularly scheduled rest periods.
5. Limit time in the sun when UV Index (ultraviolet ray strength) is most intense, between 11am – 4 pm.
6. Sunscreens/insect repellent are not recommended for infants under 6 months of age. Keep babies under 1 year of age out of direct sunlight.
7. Ensure all children wear a wide brimmed hat (or with back flap), UV protective sunglasses, light and loose fitting clothing.
8. Apply sunscreen SPF 15 (or higher) 20-30 minutes before going outside to ensure absorption.
9. When using DEET insect repellent, apply 20-30 minutes after sunscreen has been applied.
10. Check regularly on infants and young children; ensure children are well hydrated (expressed breast milk or water is the liquid of choice; diluted fruit juice is acceptable).
11. NEVER leave children or pets in a closed parked vehicle.
12. Monitor children in wheelchairs in regards to the equipment metal, vinyl and heat.
13. Conduct a feel test of playground components to ensure they are not so hot as to cause burns. Discontinue use if you cannot safely touch surfaces.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit recommends that childcare providers recognize the signs of heat-related illness, and follow first aid treatments:

Signs of Heat Illness	Treatment
<p>Sunburn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redness, pain, swelling of skin, blisters, fever and headaches 	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave water blisters intact to speed healing and avoid infection. If breaking of blister occurs, apply dry, sterile dressing. Serious cases should be seen by a physician.
<p>Heat Cramps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Painful muscle spasms usually in the legs but possibly abdomen; heavy sweating 	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply firm pressure on cramping muscles or gently massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water or expressed breast milk, if nausea occurs, discontinue sips of water or expressed breast milk. Move person to a cooler place to rest in a comfortable position. Observe the person carefully for changes of condition.
<p>Heat Exhaustion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy sweating, weakness, cold, pale and clammy skin; weak pulse, fainting and vomiting, core temperature usually 38.8°Celsius or higher, but normal temperature is possible 	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get person out of sun, move person to a cooler environment. Lay person down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Give sips of water or expressed breast milk. If vomiting continues, see immediate medical attention.
<p>Heatstroke:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A severe medical emergency, high body temperature (41°Celsius or higher), hot, dry skin, rapid pulse, possible unconsciousness, disorientation, confusion and lack of sweating <p>Additional Information: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/climat/heat-chaleur/index-eng.php#appd3 http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/climat/heat-children_chaleur-enfants/index-eng.php</p>	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call 911. Do not give fluids if unable to get person to medical help immediately. Move the person to a cooler environment. Remove outer clothing. Reduce body temperature using lukewarm (not cold) water to bathe/sponge the person.

Reference: Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit



For more information, please call **1-800-660-5853** or visit our website at **www.healthunit.org**