

## Heat Waves and Health

### Can a Heat Wave Happen Here?

Weather is a defining feature in Newfoundland and Labrador and can vary quite a bit depending on the location. St. John's and the Avalon, for example, have much different temperatures than Happy-Valley Goose Bay. Despite the strong weather patterns that effect Labrador and the island, heat waves are still possible. Because of the rarity of hot days, it is possible the effects of a heat wave can be greater in this province than others because there are less air conditioners and other means to beat the heat.

### Risks from Heat Waves

There are numerous potential health problems that can come from a heat wave. Heat stroke, dehydration, and exhaustion are the most important health issues. However, other problems can occur including general irritation and an increase in chronic or mental illness symptoms.

**To avoid the effects of a heat waves consider the following steps:**

#### Keep your house cool

- Close the blinds during the day to keep sunlight from heating the home.
- Open the windows only in the night and evening, if the outdoor temperature has fallen.
- Cook inside as little as possible, consider using the barbecue or eating meals with little preparation time.

#### Keep yourself cool

- Avoid strenuous activity.
- Take a cool shower.
- Apply a cool moist towel around your neck.
- Spend a couple hours in a cool place.
- Wear loose fitting light coloured clothing.

#### Keep your self hydrated

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Drink even when you don't feel thirsty.

#### Helping others

- Make sure to check in on any relatives and neighbours. Older individuals are at a greater risk of heat illness, especially those that live alone.
- Never leave animals or children in parked cars.

#### Monitor your health

Though heat illness is preventable, sometimes it is possible to suffer heat related complications even if you follow the outlined steps. Remember to monitor for these signs:

- dizziness or fainting
- nausea or vomiting
- headache
- rapid breathing and heartbeat
- extreme thirst (dry mouth or sticky saliva)
- decreased urination with unusually dark yellow urine

**Don't forget to listen to the radio for any messages about places to cool down or tips for beating the heat.**