

# Prepare for Extreme Heat: A Guide for People Who Use Substances

**An extreme heat event can be dangerous to your health**

## Substances can make you more sensitive to extreme heat

- **Stimulants** (cocaine, crack, or meth) can increase your body temperature and make it harder to cool off
- **Opioids** (heroin, fentanyl) can make it hard to feel hot and take action to protect yourself
- **Sedatives** (medetomidine, benzos) may lead to prolonged sedation and cause you to be exposed to direct sun or hot surfaces for long periods of time

Try to find a shaded spot before you use and remember the sun will move during the day

## Symptoms from extreme heat can last a long time

- People usually experience health effects during a heat wave, but some people might have symptoms that last weeks or months

## It is important to be prepared for extreme heat events

### Make an extreme heat kit

- Bottled water
- Cups
- Large basins or water jugs
- Instant ice packs and ice
- Containers to hold ice
- Fans
- Compressed towels
- Sunscreen
- Fruit and vegetables
- Taxi vouchers
- Tin foil
- Misting bottles
- Take Home Naloxone kits
- First aid supplies
- Lightweight clothing
- Electrolytes

**There may be barriers to getting these supplies  
Find what you can and reach out for support**

## Make a plan

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- Know where to get drinking water and sip regularly, don't wait until you get thirsty
- Find cooling centres, public places with A/C, or outdoor shaded areas if possible
- If you have A/C, check that it works
- Make plans with friends and neighbours to check in on each other
- Gather enough harm reduction supplies
- Ask a pharmacist:
  - If any of your medications will affect how your body handles extreme heat
  - If you can get extended carries to last through the heat wave and a few days after

## Know when to get medical help

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Do not assume a person's sedation is caused by substance use

### Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke

#### You might feel:

- Dizzy
- Thirsty
- Very sweaty
- Nauseous
- Weak

### Heat stroke can cause disability or death

#### You might feel:

- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness

### For both heat exhaustion and heat stroke: ACT FAST

- Move to a cooler area
- Cool off with water or ice
- Loosen clothing and remove layers



**Heat stroke is a medical emergency!  
Call 9-1-1 or seek medical attention!**

## Extreme heat and mental health

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### Extreme heat for several days can affect mental health

#### Get medical care if you're experiencing:

- Irritability
- Psychological distress
- Aggression or violence
- Suicidal thoughts