

Safety

While children are in your care, they will engage in activities which support their natural curiosity. Being aware of each child's developmental progress is important in ensuring your environment is safe.

Being able to anticipate a child's need to investigate and to grow physically will help you to set up your home for the children in your care.

This section of the manual includes regulations and suggestions for making your home safe for children.

It is your responsibility as a caregiver to **reduce the likelihood** of accidents from happening.

Children are naturally curious and adventurous. If all risks are taken out of a child's environment, their growth and development will be compromised.

Establishing and maintaining a safe, yet fun, place for children is an important task but can also be a challenge. SAFETY FIRST!



Lack of supervision, lack of awareness of the potential hazards, and the improper use of child-related products or inadequate product maintenance may cause injury/accidents.

Caregivers must ensure:

- Every child is to be supervised by an adult at all times whether on or off their property
- Outdoor play is supervised in accordance with the plans agreed upon by the caregiver, the parent of a child receiving care and a Home Child Care consultant.



For more information regarding the role of risk in play and learning, explore the resources below.

- [The Role of Risk in Play and Learning](#)
- [Risky play is essential for child development](#)



Children's Toys and Equipment

Product Regulations

- All toys and equipment must meet Canadian safety standards

Not all children's products have standards/regulations governing their design and manufacture. In Canada, the "Hazardous Products Act" regulates many products.

- [Safety: Choosing Safe Children's Products](#)
- [Is Your Child Safe? Play Time](#)

Other products may have either mandatory or voluntary standards in the United States. As a result, Canadian children may benefit from these regulations as a vast majority of children's products are manufactured for sale in both Canada and the United States.

General Safety tips for All Children's Products

- Always follow all the manufacturer's instructions for set-up and use of each product.
- Only use if the child fits within all age, height, weight and developmental limits specified by the manufacturer.
- Always supervise a child when using any product.
- Always use the occupant restraint system (seat belt) if there is one on the product.
- Check the product regularly to make sure there are no broken or missing parts.
- Replace and/or repair all broken and missing parts immediately. Do not use a product that is in need of repair. When repairing a product, use only parts that are provided or recommended by the manufacturer.
- Dispose of any products that cannot be repaired properly.
- Dispose products that do not meet current safety standards.



If there is any doubt about the safety of a product, do not use it!

This [Guide to Second-Hand Products](#) is a great resource that can help you assess the products in your home to determine if they are still safe.



Always use caution when purchasing second hand toys and equipment- again, safety is the most important factor.

Product Recalls

In Canada, distributors or manufacturers of a product may voluntarily recall products when they become aware of a defect in a product that makes it unsafe. Although Health Canada's product Safety Program does not have power to order a compulsory recall of a children's product, Health Canada works cooperatively with companies to ensure that dangerous products are taken off the market.

It is important to check [here](#) regularly for recalls to any children's product. This information can be obtained from the manufacturer, either through their internet website or by phone. It is a good idea to fill out and return the product registration card to the manufacturer. The manufacturer may try to contact you if a recall is issued.

Children's Toys

- Select toys suitable for the child's developmental level, and make sure to read and follow all instructions that come with the toys.
- Check toys regularly and throw away broken toys which may have sharp edges.
- Be aware of toys that may pose a choking hazard – be sure to separate toys according to age groups who may use them.





Toy Boxes

- Home child care recommends that you consider using low shelving to store your toys instead of a traditional “toy box”.
- If you are using a toy box, it should not have lid but if it does, there should be a safety mechanism to prevent the box from closing.

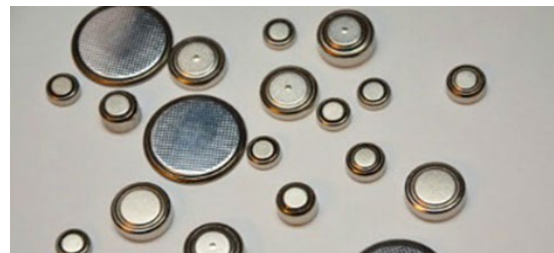
Toys with Batteries

- Make sure batteries in toys for young children are properly installed and the batteries are never accessible to the child.
- It is dangerous to mix older batteries with newer ones, or to mix alkaline with carbon, or rechargeable with non-rechargeable.
- A child should not take battery-operated toys to bed.
- If a child swallows a button battery, call your doctor or poison control centre immediately. **Poison Control Centre 1-800-268-9017**
- Please do not allow children to play with TV remotes or any household items that have batteries.
- Beware of the dangers of “button batteries”.

What are button batteries?

Button batteries and lithium coin batteries are the small round batteries found in small electronics, such as:

- Remote controls
- Thermometers
- Calculators
- Key fobs
- Watches and electronic jewelry
- Flashing shoes & clothing
- Cameras



- Holiday ornaments
- Flameless candles
- Musical greeting cards

As more homes use these small electronics, the risk of these batteries getting into the hands of curious and crawling infants and young children continues to increase.

How do these batteries injure children?

When it comes into contact with body fluids, the battery generates a current that produces a chemical reaction in the child's body. If the battery gets stuck somewhere in the body, it will burn a hole at that spot. Infection usually follows. The result can be serious injury and illness, long-term disability, or even death.

Baby Walkers

Health Canada has deemed the use of a baby walker as unsafe and has **banned** the sale and importation of them in Canada. **DO NOT USE.**



Safe Sleep

Every caregiver must follow the policies and procedures for sleep supervision.

Visual Sleep Check

Caregivers will perform a direct visual check of each sleeping child by being physically present beside the child while the child is sleeping and check for indicators of distress or unusual behaviours. Caregivers must do this every hour that the child is sleeping and document the time in their log book.

Overnight Care

Overnight care will require a caregiver to follow the one hour check schedule and then check the child before the caregiver retires to bed and then again in the morning until the child awakes.

Sleeping Arrangement Permission Form

Each child in care will have this form stating where the parent has given permission for their child to nap/sleep. This form will be updated as needed (eg. Crib to bed).

Things to Consider:

- Each child 18 months and up to and including five years old who are in care for six hours or more must nap on a cot, mattress or bed with bedding that is not shared with anyone else.
- If using a sleep mat or mattress on the floor, it must be a minimum of **4 inches thick**.
- Each toddler or preschool child who receives child care for six hours or more in a day has a rest period not exceeding two hours.



Rest/Quiet

A child who no longer naps, a quiet time will be provided allowing the child to look at books or complete puzzles. This is a time that is inactive and allows the child to relax quietly, no screen time.

Every child who is younger than 12 months is placed for sleep in a manner consistent with the recommendations set out in the document *Preventing Sudden Infant Deaths in Canada* (Public Health Agency of Canada), unless a child's physician recommends otherwise in writing.

Every child who is younger than 12 months is placed on their back to sleep, no blankets, bumper pads or covers in the crib or playpen. Sleep sacks are permitted.

For more information regarding safe sleep visit [Region of Waterloo – Infant sleep](#).

Pet Safety

Pets are part of some family homes. It is important to consider the safety of your pet as well as the children you care for.

Please keep your pet away from the children's play area to prevent your family pet from being put in a situation that may require them to injure a child unintentionally.

Litter boxes, pet food and pet toys should be inaccessible to the children for choking and sanitary reasons.



Hazardous Products

Children are naturally curious and will taste, touch and smell anything within their reach. Any areas where medications, cleaning fluids, flammable materials or chemicals can be found are danger zones for children.

Almost any product in your home can be harmful. It is important to keep this in mind when you Safety Proof your home. It is the requirement of Home Child Care that all poisonous and hazardous products are locked up and/or out of reach of all children.

This section contains a list of products that are considered to be hazardous and poisonous. Being aware of these items will help you to properly "Safety Proof" your home.

Click [here](#) to review a list of the most common items that are accidentally swallowed by young children:

Examples of Hazardous Household Items

- Housecleaning products including dish soap
- Medication (prescription/over the counter/natural)
- Vitamins
- Essential oils
- Mercury from a Thermometer
- Perfumes
- Mouthwash (contains alcohol)
- Plants (including cannabis/marijuana).
 - Click [here](#) for more information on poisonous plants.
 - It is important to know the name of all the plants in your home in case of ingestion.

Poison Control Centre 1-800-268-9017

What to do if a child accidentally swallows or ingests a dangerous substance:

1. Bring **child** and **substance** ingested to the phone & call 1-800-268-9017
2. You will need to tell them the child's:
 - Age
 - Weight
 - What was taken
 - How much was ingested
 - What time it was taken

Safety Guidelines in Your Home

1. House numbers shall be easily visible from the street.
2. Smoke alarms shall be located on every floor of the dwelling and installed according to the manufacturer's directions. Smoke alarms shall be either electrically operated or battery operated, but must be C.S.A. approved.
3. All smoke alarms shall be visually checked weekly and must be tested monthly by the caregiver.
4. Batteries shall be changed every 6 months. It is recommended that in homes with an electrical smoke alarm system that a battery operated smoke alarm be



installed on the sleeping level.

5. All rooms in a single family residence used for Home Child Care shall be no more than one storey from an exit to ground.
6. Basements shall not be used for sleeping or napping unless there is an exit directly to the outside, or approved by the Fire Department.
7. An approved portable fire extinguisher (Minimum 2A-10BC) shall be mounted in an accessible location to the kitchen. This must be between the stove and the exit and must be visible.
8. The extinguisher should be visually checked by the home owner each month and inspected and tagged annually by a qualified person.
9. All homes used for child care shall have a plan for exit in case of fire. The fire evacuation plan is to be posted at each exit.
10. Home Child Care Caregivers shall practice fire drills once a month with the children in their care and maintain a written record of these drills. To be effective, fire drills should be practiced at different times of the day and when children are in different parts of the house.
11. Furnace areas and water heaters shall be kept clear of combustible materials. The area shall be at least 3 feet on all exposed sides.
12. Proper fusing and wiring of electrical circuits shall be practiced.
13. Fireplaces shall have a screen. Gas and wood stoves must be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions.
14. Propane shall be stored outside and at least 3 feet from a door or window.
15. Gas shall be stored in an approved container in a garage or storage shed. No more than 2 gallons or 10 litres shall be in storage.
16. Deep frying shall not occur during child care hours (or any cooking in oil on the stove).
17. No candles may be burned during child care hours.

18. Combustible materials shall not be allowed to accumulate in any part of the house.

19. Exits shall always be accessible and free of clutter.



Car Safety

Outings with children support their learning process as the children can engage with their community and in natural environments.

All outings must be discussed with all parents/guardians prior to the event as well as ensuring that you have an accessible copy of the Application and Consent form or electronic Child Intake Package. Don't forget to pack a first aid kit!

Outings may involve the use of a vehicle on an occasional or regular basis. In certain cases, parents will not want their child to be transported in your vehicle. We must ensure the parent/guardian has given consent on their paperwork before planning an outing using your vehicle.

Trips outside the Regional boundaries must be pre-authorized by the parent and your Consultant. Complete the details of the trip on the "Consent for Excursions & Outings Outside the Region" form as it must be signed by the parent/guardian as well as your consultant BEFORE the trip.

Prior to vehicle travel, you must ensure that the children are properly restrained in the vehicle according to their age, height and/or weight. The Governments and of Canada and Ontario have laws regarding car seats and booster seats. Those laws ensure that the seats are properly installed and tethered in the vehicle, and that the National Safety mark label is attached with an expiry date. Click [here](#) for information on choosing a child car seat or booster seat.

As children age and no longer require a car/booster seat it is important that children are properly restrained in the backseat of the vehicle.

A car/booster seat must be replaced when it reaches its expiry date, has been in an accident or parts are broken or torn. The accident may be minor but it could cause a crack in the plastic frame of the seat. It is important to note that you cannot purchase a used car/booster seat.

Insurances companies must be informed that you are transporting children in your vehicle and provide proof of \$2 million dollar automobile liability to your consultant.

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Note: Home Child Care liability insurance does not cover you or the children in your care while in the car.

Please remember, no one in the car may smoke or vape when children are present. Click [here](#) for more information about where you can't smoke or vape in Ontario.

Did you know ...?

- Most manufacturers recommend that you replace a car seat that has been in a car crash, even a minor one. Contact your manufacturer if you are unsure.
- Children should not wear bulky coats in the winter – this impacts the correct fit of the straps of the car seat.
- Children under 13yrs old should not sit in the front seat
- Some local community resources offer car seat clinics. There may be someone who has been trained to help with installation or check that you have installed the car seat correctly.



For safety alerts and notices for child car seats from Transport Canada click [here](#).

Playgrounds

What great fun - a trip to the park or to the playground! Kids love it but as a caregiver you have to be on alert to keep them safe.

Before you go to the Park

- Pick the right park for your children. Not all equipment is appropriate for all children. If you have a group of toddlers, find a park with equipment designed for younger children (age 2 - 5 years).
- Have application and consent form accessible for outings whether on your device or paper copies.
- Ensure the children are dressed appropriately (remove cords and drawstrings from jackets and other clothing).
- Ensure your cell phone is charged and you have a first aid kit for emergencies.

- Review safety rules before arriving at the park so the children are aware of the expectations.
- Pack water for each child.

What to consider once you arrive at the Park

- Complete a quick safety check of the area.
- Check under and around the equipment for broken glass, discarded needles, animal faeces, etc. Remove all unwanted material carefully and dispose of it in a safe manner.
- Check the equipment and remove any ropes or skipping ropes tied to the equipment. These are not safe for children.
- Look for broken or vandalized equipment. It may be unsafe for your children to play on.
- Check for hazards like loose bolts, exposed concrete, shallow protective surfacing. Report unsafe conditions immediately to the City.
- In the summer, check metal slides to ensure they are not too hot to play on. On sunny days, in full sun, metal can burn young skin quickly.
- Make sure children remove their bike helmets before playing on the structure.
- In the winter, watch out for ice! The protective surfacing that works well in warm weather will not do the job of absorbing an impact if it is ice covered. Keep children off the equipment when there is an ice build-up.
- **Active supervision** - Keep your eye on all the children and move through the play area regularly to supervise each child in your care.



Backyard Play Structures

Children love playing on backyard swing sets, jungle gyms, ride-on toys, playhouses, and climbers. If these play structures are not properly put together, installed or maintained, they can cause injuries to children. Even the best-designed and maintained play structures can be hazardous if children are not supervised or taught basic rules about proper use.

Please click [here](#) to read recommendations to make sure that your backyard play structures are safe for children in your care.

Location

- Swing sets should be located a safe distance from fences, trees, houses, electrical wires or other obstacles as well as from other play equipment so children don't run

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into the path of the swings.

- All equipment should be located on a surface that will reduce the impact of a fall, such as wood chips or sand. Grass does not effectively cushion a fall. The area should be kept free from broken glass or other debris.
- Metal slides can become too hot for safe use. Place them in the shade or facing away from the sun.

Assembly

- Assemble and install equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions. If the instructions are not clear, contact the manufacturer or dealer. If the play structure isn't put together properly, the equipment could break or cause serious injury.
- Keep the instruction sheets. You may need them to make repairs or order parts.
- Making changes to the equipment without the manufacturer's approval could make the structure unsafe.
- Tighten nuts and bolts periodically when inspecting your equipment.

Adult Supervision is Essential

- Remove any ropes or skipping ropes tied to the equipment. These could strangle a child.
- Make sure that children in your care are dressed safely. Loose clothing, hats with chinstraps, cords on hoods, ponchos, scarves and jewellery can get caught on equipment.
- Check for ice on and under the equipment in the winter.
- Children need constant supervision. They should never be left alone on play structures. You must always be within arm's reach when children under 6yrs are on play structures.
- Older children often try to make equipment "more challenging" and use it in unexpected and unintended ways. They may take bigger risks as they develop their physical skills, and younger children may copy.

Seasonal Outdoor Play

Frequent physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development in children and what better way than outdoor play. With proper precautions, the outdoors can be a safe and fun environment to explore.



Summer Safety

The warm sunny days of summer provide a wonderful setting for children to go outdoors and have fun. Unfortunately, summer sunshine can be very dangerous. The thinning of

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the ozone layer allows more dangerous ultraviolet radiation to reach earth. Children with sensitive skin are in danger of sun-induced damage.

The following suggestions could help provide safe summer fun:

- Ensure each child in your care has sunscreen supplied by the parent to be administered throughout the day. Each child must have authorized consent for the Caregiver to apply sunscreen.
- Sunscreen should be labelled with child's name.
- Remember to apply sunscreen to the child's ears, nose, the top of the feet and creases in their arms and legs.
- The caregiver should apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before the child goes outside. Reapply every two hours, or more frequently if the child is playing in water or sweating heavily.
- Whenever possible arrange play times to keep children out of the sun from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. to avoid the sun's strongest ultraviolet radiation.
- In the heat of the day, arrange appropriate activities in shaded areas geared to the temperature reading. Look at providing more shade in the forms of trees and structures in your children's play area.
- Be aware of children who are on medications which could increase their sensitivity to the sun.
- Keep young children and infants out of the sun as much as possible. Do not use sunscreen on babies under six months of age.
- Remember, cloudy days are not a protection from the sun's rays because 80% of the sun's burning rays get through light clouds, haze and fog to reach the ground.
- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is measured on a scale of 0 to 10. The higher the number the more UV rays you will be exposed to and the faster you will burn. Your local radio and TV stations give a UV Index each day.
- Skin damage can also be caused by contact with indirect sun rays reflected off surfaces such as metal, sand and water. Shade alone will not protect children from getting too much sun. Use of a sunscreen and proper clothing is a must for all outdoor activities.



- Check play equipment on a sunny day as the sun can make the equipment very hot and the child could suffer contact burns.
- Have the child drink plenty of liquids in order to replenish body fluids.
- Serve fruit drinks and sticky snacks inside to avoid attracting bees and the possibility of a child being stung.



Winter Safety

The wonderful magic of winter and the arrival of snow provides children with new outdoor play areas. Winter can be an enjoyable safe time with some precautions.

- Children need to be dressed in appropriate winter outdoor clothing such as snow pants, hats and mittens.
- Attention should be made to avoid overdressing. It can cause the child to sweat and become chilled when he/she stops playing. When children become chilled the risk of frostbite increases.
- Scarves should be eliminated to prevent them from becoming entangled on play equipment and possibly strangling the child.
- Hoods on coats need to be snugly tied to prevent catching on equipment and choking the child.
- Be aware of both the actual temperature and the wind chill factor; it could be colder than recorded by the thermometer.
- Health and safety factors such as temperatures below -10°C to -15°C need to be taken into consideration when making a decision on suitable conditions for outdoor play.
- When outdoors keep the children active. The activities should be geared to the appropriate age levels.
- Be aware of children with sensitivity to frostbite.
- Be aware of the elements such as freezing rain or icy surfaces on play areas.
- The length of time spent outdoors will depend on the activities involved and whether the play area is sheltered or not.
- Discourage the eating of snow as it may contain dirt, pollution, animal feces and other contaminants.



Fire Safety

The Child Care and Early Years Act requires that:

“....a written procedure is established with respect to evacuation in the event of fire for each location where private home child care is provided.....”

To meet these requirements our local fire departments have approved the below Fire Evacuation Plan. Copies of this plan are available from the Home Child Care Caseworker. These plans are to be posted at all exits of your home.

Home Child Care
Fire Evacuation Plan
(post at each exit)

In case of fire:

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ All meet at pre-determined area near exit
- ✓ Close any doors on the way
- ✓ Count children - be sure everyone's there
- ✓ Leave and go to neighbours (prearranged)
- ✓ Call the Fire Department (911), giving the name and address, then wait to answer any questions.

Practice A Fire Drill Once A Month

Children need to understand that the word **fire** signals alarm. The only time that the word is used is for a fire drill or a real fire situation.

Having a fire escape plan and practicing fire drills regularly (monthly) will help prepare everyone in the event of a real fire.

It is very important to emphasize that everyone keeps calm and follow the practised routine.

Suggestions for Fire Drill Practice

1. Warn the children that you are going to set off the smoke alarm. Explain what they are to do when they hear the noise. Follow through with your evacuation plan.
2. Set off the smoke alarm at a time when the children are **not** expecting it. Follow through with your fire evacuation plan.
3. Create a game. Hide a red piece of paper that says **fire**. When the child or adult who finds it yells **fire**, follow your fire evacuation plan.

The Fire Escape Plan

- Make an escape plan of your house and have two escape routes from every room. Make sure everyone knows the plan.
- If you live in an apartment, **never** use the elevator during a real or practice fire drill, always use the stairs.
- Special attention must be given to babies and young children.
- Have a pre-arranged meeting place where everyone must meet to assure that all are safe.



Other Emergency Procedures + Emergency Preparedness

“Know the risks, make a plan, have a kit”. Visit [here](#) to view the Government of Canada’s Emergency Preparedness Guide and [here](#) to for tips of getting prepared for an emergency.

Tornados

Prepare a Home Tornado Plan

- Pick a place where family members could gather if a tornado is headed your way. It could be a basement, a centre hallway, bathroom, or closet on the lowest floor. Keep this place uncluttered.
- If you are in a high-rise building, you may not have enough time to go to the lowest floor. Pick a place in the hallway in the centre of the building.

Assemble a supply kit containing:

- First Aid Kit and essential medications
- Canned food and can opener
- At least three gallons of water per person
- Protective clothing and blanket
- Battery powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries

Stay Tuned for Storm Warnings

- Listen to your local radio or TV stations for updated storm information.
- Know what a tornado **watch** and **warning** means:
 - ✓ A tornado **watch** means a tornado is possible in your area.
 - ✓ A tornado **warning** means a tornado has been sighted and may be headed for your area. Go to safety immediately.

Tornado Watch

- Listen to local radio and TV stations for further updates.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions. Rain frequently precedes a tornado, usually with hail and with a heavy downpour.

Tornado Warning

- If you are inside, go to the safe place you picked to protect yourself from glass and other flying objects.
- If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building, or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area.
- If you are in a car, get out immediately and head for safety.

After the Tornado Passes

- Stay out of the damaged area and watch out for fallen power lines.
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
- Use a flashlight to inspect your home for damage.
- Do not use candles at any time in case of a gas leak.

Natural Gas Leaks

Natural gas has a distinct, pungent odour so it is easy to detect. Leaking gas can cause an explosion and fire.

If you smell a strong odour of natural gas

- Get everyone out of the house at once
- Go to a neighbour's house and call 911 immediately
- Open the windows
- Do not use the telephone or lighter
- Do not turn any electrical switches or lights on or off

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas that is produced when heating systems are not working correctly. You cannot smell, taste or see carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide can build up inside a building and can cause severe sickness or death.

Symptoms

- Sudden flu-like illness
- Dizziness, headaches and sleepiness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fluttering or throbbing heart beat
- Cherry red lips, and pallor
- Unconsciousness



If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning

- Get victim out into fresh air immediately and call 911
- Get everyone else out and open the windows

Blackouts

Prepare an Emergency Kit including:

- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Portable radio
- At least one gallon of water
- A small supply of food

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- Due to extreme risk of fire, do not use candles during a blackout

If you have space in your refrigerator or freezer, consider filling plastic containers with water. Place the container in the fridge or freezer. This chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold if the power goes out.

If you have medication that requires refrigeration, most can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours without a problem.

If you have a telephone that requires electricity to work, plan for alternate communication, e.g. cell phone, pager or radio.

Keep your car's gas tank at least half full as gas stations rely on electricity to power their gas pumps.

What to do during a blackout

- Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment (like air conditioners) or electronics you were using when the power went out. When the power comes back on, it may come back on with momentary surges or that can damage equipment such as computers and motors and appliances like the air conditioner, refrigerator, washer or furnace.
- Leave one light turned on so you will know when your power returns.
- Leave the doors of your refrigerator and freezer closed to keep your food as fresh as possible.
- Use the phone for emergencies only. Listening to a portable radio can provide the latest information.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals will stop working during an outage.
- Remember equipment such as automated teller machines and elevators may not work during a power outage.
- If it is hot outside, take steps to remain cool. Move to the lowest level of your home. Wear light weight, light coloured clothing. Drink plenty of water.
- If it is cold outside, put on layers of warm clothing. Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors. If the power may be out for a prolonged period, plan to go to another location (friend, relative, public facility) that has heat to keep warm.
- Contact your consultant. If your power is off for an extended period of time you may need to close your program.

Heat Waves

Important Terminology

- **Heat wave:** Prolonged period of excessive heat and humidity. The National Weather Service steps up its procedures to alert the public during these periods of excessive heat and humidity.
- **Heat index:** A number in degrees Fahrenheit (F) or Celsius (C) that tells how hot it really feels when relative humidity is added to the actual air temperature. Exposure to full sunshine can increase the heat index by 15°F or 8°C.
- **Heat cramps:** Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. Although heat cramps are the least severe, they are an early signal that the body is having trouble with the heat.
- **Heat exhaustion:** Heat exhaustion typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. If not treated, the victim may suffer heat stroke.
- **Heat stroke:** Heat stroke is life-threatening. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.
- **Sunstroke:** Another term for heat stroke.

What to do in a Heat Wave

- Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, out of the sunshine. Try to go to a public building with air conditioning each day for several hours. Remember, electric fans do not cool the air, but they do help sweat evaporate, which cools your body.
- Wear lightweight, light coloured clothing. Light colours will reflect away some of the sun's energy.
- Drink plenty of water regularly and often. Your body needs water to keep cool.
- Drink plenty of fluids even if you do not feel thirsty
- Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies. Avoid drinks with



alcohol or caffeine in them. They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse.

- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increases metabolic heat.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.

Treatment of Heat Emergencies

- **Heat cramps:** Get the person to a cooler place and have them rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse.
- **Heat exhaustion:** Get the person out of the heat and into a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet clothes, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, give cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids that contain alcohol or caffeine. Let the victim rest in a comfortable position, and watch carefully for changes in his or her condition.
- **Heat stroke:** Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation. Help is needed fast. Call 911 or your local emergency number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Immerse victim in a cool bath, or wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. Watch for signals of breathing problems. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the victim refuses water or is vomiting or there are changes in the level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink.