



Heat-Related Illness and Deaths

July 2026

Heat-related illness and death have increased in the US and globally. In Wood County, there were over 8,000 heat-related visits to the urgent care or ED during 2025. Extreme heat causes the most deaths of any extreme weather event yet these deaths are preventable in many cases. Understanding who is at risk, what heat-related illness looks like, and how to prevent heat-related illness can help individuals stay safe during summer months.

Heat-related deaths are categorized using ICD-10 codes P81.0 (hyperthermia of newborn), T67 (effects of heat and light), and X30 (exposure to excessive natural heat). Heat-related illness is determined using urgent care/emergency department discharge diagnoses on EpiCenter, Ohio's syndromic surveillance system.

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Certain people are at higher risk for heat-related illness because of their exposure and heat tolerance. Urban areas may feel hotter than surrounding suburban or rural areas because of manmade landscapes trap the heat and human activities such as manufacturing and driving release additional heat into the region. However, rural communities also feel heat-related burden because of healthcare accessibility and many rural residents work outdoors.

Populations with more exposure to heat can include those who work outside, in manufacturing plants, first responders, or those experiencing homelessness.

Populations like children, especially infants, older adults, and those with certain medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, or certain disabilities are also more sensitive to heat-related illness because of extra sensitivity to heat.

Some medications like diuretics, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), or beta blockers can also make it more difficult to tolerate heat because they impair the body's ability to sweat, can create electrolyte imbalances, impact blood flow, or reduce the sensation of thirst. These effects can cause heat-related illness.

Humidity and heat are big stressors for the body, and it's important to understand individual risk during excessive heat warnings. Talk to a healthcare provider about the risk of heat-related illness.

Populations at high-risk for heat-related illness:

- Children
- Older adults
- Pregnant people
- Occupations like first responders and outdoor workers
- People experiencing homelessness
- People with chronic health conditions or disabilities
 - Heart conditions
 - Diabetes
 - Spinal cord injuries
 - Cognitive disabilities
 - Certain medications



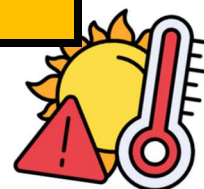
High-risk populations may be more prone to heat-related illness because they have a harder time cooling body temperature in high heat or they are exposed to high heat for longer. Heat, especially heat coupled with high humidity, makes it harder for sweat to evaporate, makes the heart pump faster, and makes kidneys work harder.

Two of the most widely known heat-related illnesses are heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Sometimes they are used interchangeably but they are two very different conditions.

Heat stroke is more serious and happens when the body can't regulate its temperature. As a result, body temperature can reach 106°F or higher within 15 minutes, potentially causing disability or death if immediate medical care is not given. Heat exhaustion happens when the body loses a large amount of water and salt, typically through sweating.

SYMPTOMS

HEAT STROKE	HEAT EXHAUSTION
Confusion, slurred speech	Headache, irritability
Loss of consciousness or coma	Dizziness, weakness
Hot, dry skin	Heavy sweating
Seizures	Thirst, decreased urine output
Very high body temp	Elevated body temp

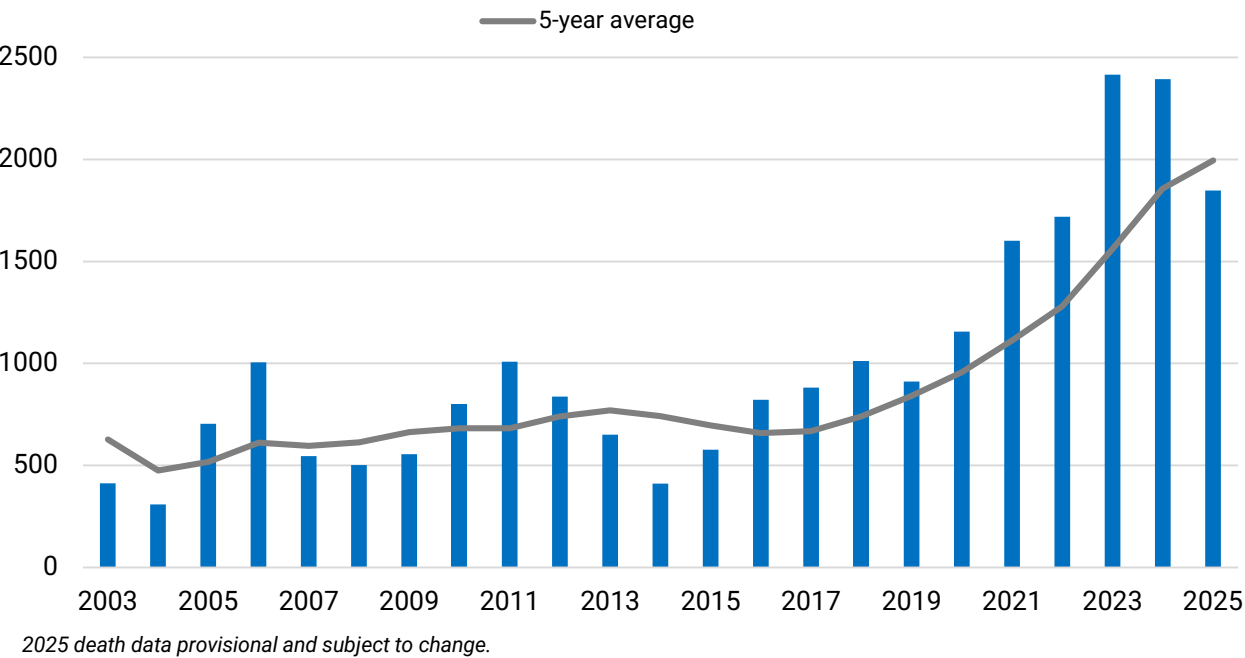


HOW TO HELP

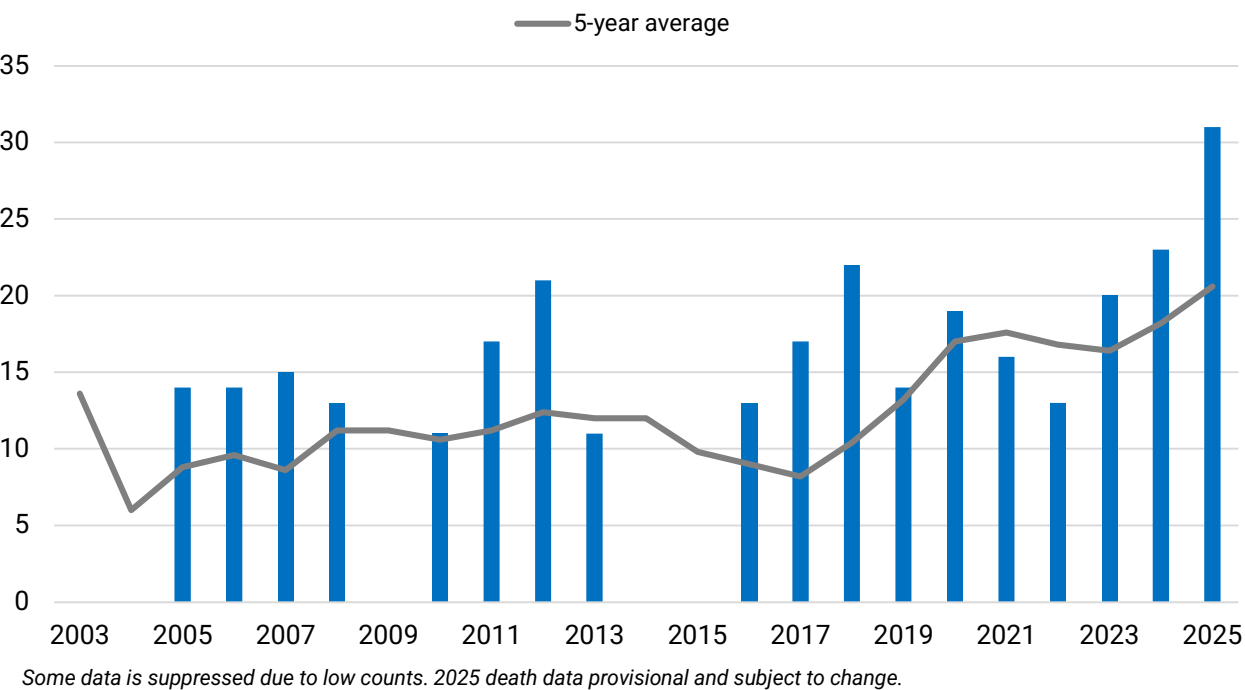
HEAT STROKE	HEAT EXHAUSTION
Call 911 for emergency medical care	Present to urgent care or ED, or call 911 if care isn't available
Move person to shaded area and remove outer clothes	Move person to cooler area and remove socks/shoes
Cool with cold water or ice bath and soak clothes with cold water	Cool with cold compresses
Circulate air around person	Encourage person to sip cold water

In the US, extreme heat causes **more deaths** than all other extreme weather events like tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes. Heat-related deaths have **increased** in the US and Ohio over the last twenty years. In 2025, there were 1,847 heat-related deaths in the US and 31 in Ohio.

Since 2004, heat-related deaths in the US have **increased nearly 500%**.

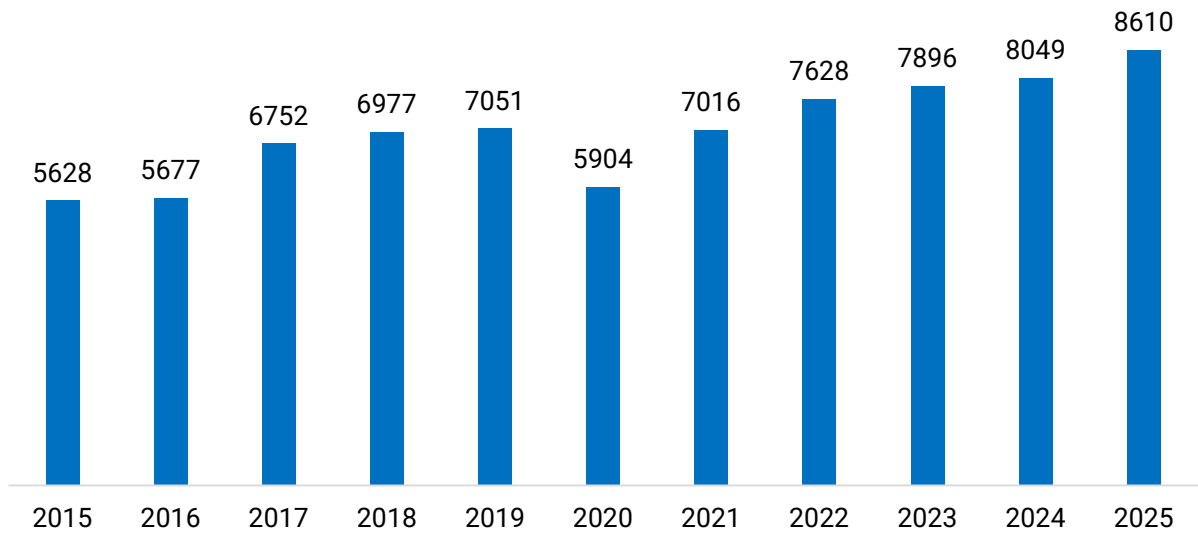


Heat-related deaths in Ohio have **increased over 120%** since 2005.



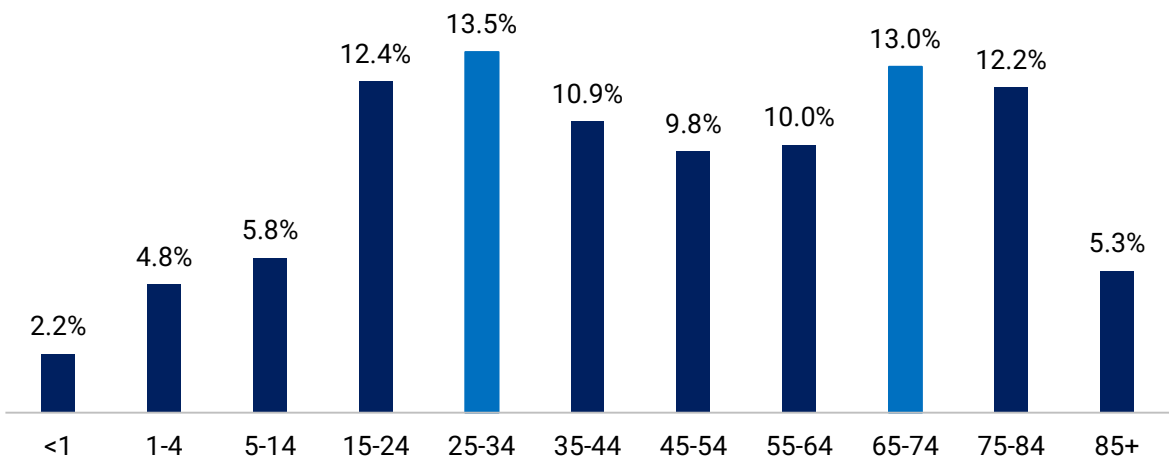
Heat-related deaths are **very low** in Wood County but urgent care/ED visits for heat-related illness have **increased** in the last 10 years.

Urgent care/ED visits for heat-related illness in Wood County are also **increasing**.



Children and older adults are at higher risk for heat strokes or heat exhaustion but younger adults may also be at risk due to personal factors. In 2025 in Wood County, younger adults and older adults presented to the ED for heat-related illness more often than any other age group.

Young adults aged 25 - 34 and **older adults aged 65 - 74** were the **most common** ages for heat-related ED visits in Wood County in 2025.



HOW TO BEAT THE HEAT



STAY HYDRATED

- Drink water throughout the day, *about 1 cup every 15 minutes if you are working or active*
- Limit drinks with sugar, alcohol, or caffeine



STAY COOL

If you are outside

- stay in the shade
- take breaks
- do activities in the evening

If you are inside

- take breaks
- find air conditioning
- use a fan if the room is <90 F

If you or someone you're with is overheating (*confused, dizzy, extremely hot*)

- stop what you're doing
- cool down
- decide if medical care is needed

KNOW THE SIGNS



KNOW YOUR RISK

Understand if your health status makes you at higher risk for heat-related illness.

Are you pregnant, elderly, or someone with chronic conditions?

Use CDC's HeatRisk Map to check how hot is it near you

<https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/Applications/HeatRisk>

TRACK THE HEAT

