

Extreme heat and your health

Rising temperatures, high humidity, and poor air quality combined can impede one's ability to regulate and cool internal body temperature, which can result in illness or death. Stay cool, stay hydrated, and know the symptoms of heat-related illness. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at [Preventing Heat-Related Illness | Extreme Heat | CDC](#) and the [Division of Public Health](#). Use the following tips from the CDC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to stay comfortable and safe.

When outside:

- Wear light, loose, and breathable clothing.
- Remain in the shade as much as possible, taking frequent breaks from the sun and heat.
- Take advantage of early morning and early evening hours for yard work or outdoor activities.
- In extreme heat, a car can quickly become deadly even with windows cracked. Never leave children, pets, or anyone in the car during heat warnings.

When indoors:

- Use fans, but only if indoor temperatures are less than 90 degrees F. In temperatures above 90 degrees F, a fan can increase body temperature.
- Use air conditioning or go to a cooler location such as a mall, library, pool, or cooling center during the hottest hours of the day.

Stay Hydrated

- Carry a water bottle, drink often, and refill often.
- Limit high-sugar sodas, alcoholic drinks, and heavy meals.
- Check urine color for dehydration. It is light yellow or clear when you are drinking enough water.

Know the Symptoms

- Muscle cramping
- Unusually heavy sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Weakness
- Nausea.

If any of these symptoms occur, immediately stop activity, seek a cooler place indoors, and call 911 if symptoms do not subside. Learn more at [Symptoms of Heat-Related Illnesses | Extreme Heat | CDC](#).



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Some groups are at risk for heat illness

During periods of extreme heat, be sure to check on neighbors, those you support, and pets. Anyone can suffer a heat-related illness, but those with medical conditions, those with access and functional needs, and those who are outdoors are at greater risk. On hot days, the CDC advises the following groups to take additional actions:

- People, especially children, with [asthma](#) and other respiratory conditions
- [People with heart disease](#) and overweight people
- [Pregnant women](#)
- [People 65 years of age or older](#)
- People who [work](#) or [exercise](#) in the heat
- [Infants and young children.](#)

To stay safe and healthy this summer season, those at greater risk of heat-related illness should develop a Heat Action Plan with their health care provider. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/heat-health/media/pdfs/Heat-and-Health-Guidance-Infographic-508.pdf>

A new [Heat and Health Index \(HHI\)](#) provides heat-related illness data and heat health risk by ZIP Code. It is the latest step by the Biden-Harris Administration to help communities prepare for [extreme heat](#) and prevent heat-related illness. HHI was developed by CDC, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity, all within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Find HHI at [Heat & Health Tracker | Tracking | NCEH | CDC](#).



Breathe safely on hot days

The heat can worsen air quality and impact health through increased exposure to ozone, [fine particulate matter](#), and chemicals. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), breathing



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polluted air can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes, arrhythmias, and worsen heart failure. Breathing high concentrations of fine particulate matter can trigger cardiac events, which can lead to death.

The CDC advises to prevent heat-related illness by:

- Every day, check the [Air Quality Index](#) (AQI) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; or Delawareans can visit the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control at <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/air/quality/forecast/>. Also check the CDC's [HeatRisk](#) Dashboard daily.
- When the AQI is less than 100, most people can be active outside. Those sensitive to air pollution when the AQI is 51 to 100 should talk with their health care provider. When the AQI exceeds 100, outdoor air is unhealthy, and individuals should limit outdoor activity, take more breaks, and do less intense activities.
- Use a portable air purifier if you have heart problems or are sensitive to poor air quality.
- Stay cool and stay hydrated. [Drink water](#) to help the body function normally and limit sugary, caffeinated, and alcoholic beverages. Signs of dehydration are muscle cramps; dizziness or feeling lightheaded, rapid heart rate, thirst, darker color urine, and infrequent urination.

To keep indoor air clean at any time of year, use a portable air purifier and:

- Reduce indoor pollutants such as cigarette smoke, candles, and air fresheners.
- Bring outdoor air in when cooking (when AQI is less than 100), such as briefly opening a window.
- On heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, use a replaceable High Efficiency Particulate Air filter with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value of 13 or higher.

For more healthy indoor air tips, visit the Division of Public Health's [Healthy Homes Program](#).

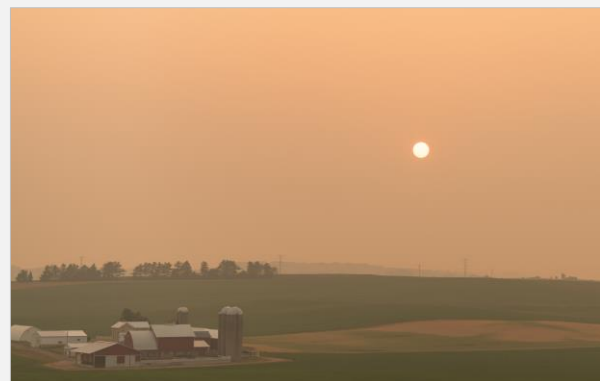
Minimize wildfire smoke impacts

In the summer of 2023, smoke from wildfires in Canada greatly diminished the air quality in Delaware and other states.

Inhaling smoke or fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) can worsen breathing conditions such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); and it can cause heart failure, heart attack, and stroke, according to the Division of Public Health (DPH).

DPH and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) advise the public to avoid outdoor smoke by staying indoors in a cool and clean environment, and for individuals working outdoors to wear properly fitted N95 or KN95 masks (not cloth or surgical masks). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest closing off a room from outside air and setting up a portable air cleaner or a filter to keep that air clean.

For Delaware air quality news, visit <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/air/quality/forecast/>. To learn where current fires are burning, visit AirNow's Fire & Smoke map at the Environmental Protection Agency's website, <https://www.airnow.gov/wildfires/>. That site also provides information on how to be smoke ready. It may be necessary during a smoke emergency to create a room with clean air. For instructions and a video, visit this EPA site: <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/create-clean-room-protect-indoor-air-quality-during-wildfire>.



DPH to launch Health Equity Institute of Delaware (HEIDE) on July 18

The Division of Public Health (DPH) invites Delawareans to participate in the launch of the Health Equity Institute of Delaware (HEIDE). The virtual event will be held on July 18 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

HEIDE is an initiative of the DPH Office of the Medical Director, Awele Maduka-Ezeh, MD, MPH, PhD, CCHP and the Office of the Chief Health Equity Officer and DPH Deputy Director, Tesha Quail, PhD, LPCMH, NCC. Through HEIDE, Drs. Maduka-Ezeh and Quail aim to train clinicians and public health professionals to approach the work throughout their careers through a health equity framework.

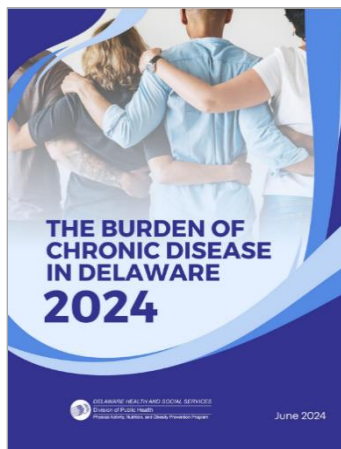
Georges Benjamin, MD, President of the American Public Health Association is the keynote speaker during the morning session. The one-hour evening lecture, “Maternal Substance Use Disorder – Challenges in Care and Access,” will be given by Hendrée Jones, PhD of the University of North Carolina and Special Expert, R3, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Both sessions are free and open to the public. To participate in the morning session, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2syaa66t>.

Registration is required for the evening session at <https://tinyurl.com/mr2pt7dy>. The Medical Society of Delaware offers continuing educational credits for the evening session.



The Division of Public Health’s Cancer Prevention and Control Bureau volunteered at the Food Bank of Delaware’s Mass Food Distribution event held on June 18 at Dover Speedway. Pictured left to right are Jade Nagyiski, Administrative Specialist II; Bryan Mena, Administrative Specialist I; and Nikita Clark, Public Health Treatment Program Administrator, Screening for Life Program. Photo by Alyssa Imprescia.



2024 Burden of Chronic Disease Report available

The Division of Public Health’s (DPH) Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Section has released [*The Burden of Chronic Disease in Delaware 2024*](#) report.

The report compares Delaware and the United States in mortality,

prevalence, and incidence of heart disease, stroke, vascular disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, and diabetes. It shares data around related risk factors such as physical activity, nutrition, and obesity, tobacco and e-cigarette use, excessive alcohol use, and adolescent health. Important racial inequities related to chronic disease and related risk factors in Delaware are also included.

According to the report, tens of thousands of Delawareans live with a chronic disease and 10% of residents have multiple chronic conditions that cost Delaware billions of dollars each year in health-related expenses. Recommendations detail how Delaware can further chronic disease prevention and management efforts to improve the health and well-being of residents statewide.

“This report highlights the progress that Delaware has made in addressing chronic disease, while also emphasizing the work that still needs to be done,” said DPH Director Steven Blessing. “DPH is committed to addressing health inequities and enhancing our initiatives for chronic disease prevention and management.”

Examples of Delaware’s progress in reducing the impact of the leading chronic diseases are:

- The five-year age-adjusted mortality rate from heart disease (as a broader group) decreased in Delaware and decreased nationally between the periods 2006 to 2010 and 2016 to 2020.
- From 2016 to 2020, Delaware had a lower hypertension mortality rate compared to the U.S.
- The mortality rate of chronic lower respiratory disease in Delaware declined between the periods 2006 to 2010 and 2016 to 2020.

To view the full report, visit <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/dpc/files/BurdenOfChronicDiseaseInDelaware2024Final.pdf>.



The Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Conference featured the Overcomers Panel: Being Your Best Self. From left: Darrell McDonald, ability advocate, EPIC Abilities; Vilicia Cade, EdD, Superintendent, Capital School District; Jessica Smith Moyer, owner, Ice House Wellness and Community; and moderator Tanya Haley, MS, CHES, CHWC, AE-C of the American Lung Association. Photo by Alyssa Imprescia.

Advancing Healthy Lifestyles event

With the Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Coalition, the Division of Public Health (DPH) Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Prevention (PANO) Program sponsored and organized the second annual Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Conference event on June 6 at Delaware State University (DSU) in Dover.

Roughly 300 attendees learned best practices to improve health, well-being, and quality of life by improving health equity. Six-time Olympic champion Jackie Joyner-Kersey gave keynote remarks.

According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), among Delaware adults in 2022, 71.8% were obese or overweight, 23.5% were not physically active, 20.5% did not consume vegetables, and 39.7% did not consume fruit. America's Health Rankings 2023 Annual Report shows that 11.5% of Delawareans cannot provide adequate food for household members.

The conference was co-sponsored by DSU, Delaware Public Health Association's Delaware Academy of Medicine, Delaware First Health, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Delaware chapters Zeta Omega, Epsilon Iota Omega, Sigma Zeta Omega, Alpha Alpha Mu Omega, and Alpha Alpha Tau Omega; Delaware Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Bayhealth, ChristianaCare, the YMCA of Delaware, and AmeriHealth Caritas of Delaware.

For more information, visit PANO at HealthyDelaware.org/AdvancingHealthyLifestyles.

Kissing bugs give no love

When two New Castle County, Del. residents each had a large, unusual bite mark and heart palpitations and a Halloween-themed insect was found indoors, they contacted the Division of Public Health (DPH) and the University of Delaware (UD).

J.K. Peterson of UD Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology identified the specimen as *Triatoma sanguisuga*, also known as the Eastern bloodsucking conenose. The 2023 detection led to a case report published in *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, Vol. 110, Issue 5 (May 2024).

Although *T. sanguisuga* is found in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern states, little is known of its local ecology or epidemiology in Delaware. The 23-millimeter insect has an orange and black striped border on the back of its abdomen. They often bite the face of sleeping people at night, earning the nickname "kissing bugs."



CDC photo

Triatomine insects can carry the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which can cause Chagas disease. When people scratch or rub the bite area, they can accidentally rub triatomine bug feces in the wound and become infected. Infection can also occur during pregnancy and when food or drink is contaminated with infected triatomine bug feces. Prevent triatomine bugs from entering structures by having window and door screens with no holes, and filling cracks and crevices through which they enter.

Chagas disease has two phases. Acute Chagas disease occurs after infection and lasts for a few weeks or months and may result in mild flu-like symptoms or swelling around the bite, though most people show no symptoms during that phase. Untreated infected people enter the chronic phase, where 20% to 30% will develop health problems years to decades later. Chronic symptoms include arrhythmias, heart failure, megacolon, megaesophagus, and sudden death.

For more information about Chagas disease, read DPH's fact sheet:

https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/Chagas_Disease_FAQ_PUB_ENG_1123_.pdf. Clinicians can take a free continuing education course through September 2, 2026 at <https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/hcp/chagas-disease/index.html>.