



Renfrew County and District Health Unit  
*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, July 02, 2025)

### **Public Health Units Unite to Promote Summer Safety Across the Eastern Region**

As summer temperatures rise, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU), Ottawa Public Health (OPH), and Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) are uniting to promote seasonal summer safety messaging. This regional collaboration aims to provide residents across the region with clear, consistent guidance on staying safe and healthy during the summer months.

#### **Stay safe during extreme heat**

Summer heat can be enjoyable, but it is important to stay safe when it turns extreme. Watch for the effects of heat illness including swelling, rash, cramps, fainting, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and the worsening of some health conditions. Extreme heat affects everyone, but the risks are higher for young children, pregnant individuals, older adults, people with chronic illnesses, those who work or exercise outdoors, individuals without air conditioning, and people experiencing homelessness. Heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable.

During [extreme heat events](#), stay up to date with local weather forecasts and alerts - tune in to local news, radio, and download the [WeatherCAN app](#). Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and eat fruits and vegetables with higher water content. Limit alcohol and caffeine. Avoid strenuous outdoor activity, especially during peak heat hours. Dress in light, loose-fitting clothing, wear a hat and sunscreen, and carry water and an umbrella if you need to be outside. Cool off in air-conditioned places like malls, libraries, or community centers, or find shade in parks and green spaces. Use fans, take cool showers, or soak your hands and feet in cool water. If you're breastfeeding, follow your child's cues and stay well-hydrated. Check in on people at higher risk, like older adults, people with chronic medical conditions, and anyone living alone.

During extreme heat and a power outage, stay cool by keeping blinds closed, using battery-powered fans, avoiding heat-generating appliances, staying in the coolest area of your home or visiting a local mall, library, or community centre with air conditioning.

#### **Protect yourself during poor air quality events**

Poor air quality poses serious health risks, even at relatively low levels. Exposure to pollutants can cause a variety of health problems, ranging from mild symptoms such as dry or irritated eyes, nose, throat, or skin, and coughing or difficulty breathing, to more serious health

complications. Individuals most at risk during poor air quality events include older adults, pregnant individuals, young children, people with heart or lung conditions, and those who work or exercise outdoors.

Download the [WeatherCAN app](#) to receive real-time alerts about air quality, extreme heat, and other weather-related risks. Check the [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#) for your region and follow public health recommendations. For up-to-date health guidance during wildfire smoke events, visit the [Special Air Quality Statement website](#).

When air quality is poor, stay indoors and keep windows closed, if possible use your HVAC system to help filter indoor air, limit outdoor activities and plan your day accordingly.

## **Sun safety**

While enjoying the sun, it's important to protect yourself from harmful UV rays. The [UV Index](#) is a helpful tool - when it's 3 or higher, sun protection is strongly recommended for all skin types. Overexposure to UV radiation can lead to sunburn, premature skin aging, eye damage, and an increased risk of skin cancer which is the most common and most preventable type of cancer. Individuals most at risk include babies and young children, whose skin is especially sensitive, as well as people who spend extended time outdoors for work or recreation.

To stay informed, check the daily [UV Index](#) in your local weather forecast or through apps like [WeatherCAN](#). One of the most effective ways to protect your skin is by using [sunscreen](#). Choose a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Apply it generously at least 20 minutes before going outside, and reapply every two hours, or more often if you're swimming or sweating. However, sunscreen alone isn't enough - it's best used in combination with other protective measures.

Wearing protective clothing is another way to protect oneself. Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a wide-brimmed hat to shield your skin. Sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays are essential for protecting your eyes. During peak sun hours - typically between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. - try to stay indoors or in the shade.

Whenever possible, seek shade under trees, umbrellas, or shelters, especially during midday. Additional precautions should be taken with babies and young children; keep infants out of direct sunlight, dress them in protective clothing, and use baby-safe sunscreen on small exposed areas if necessary.

## **Water safety**

Our region has beautiful water ways to enjoy and pools provide a fun seasonal way to cool off. Water safety is everyone's responsibility and essential to ensure a safe experience. Drowning can happen quickly and silently. Be prepared for emergencies by learning CPR and knowing how to call 9-1-1. Stay alert to changing weather conditions such as lightning, strong winds, and heavy rain as they can develop quickly and pose a serious risk.

Where possible, swim in areas supervised by lifeguards, and keep children within arm's reach at all times around water - never leave children unattended, even for a moment. Ensure that children and less experienced swimmers wear properly fitted life jackets or personal flotation

devices. Avoid alcohol, cannabis, or drugs when swimming or supervising others, as these substances can impair judgment and reaction time. While swimming lessons are valuable, they do not eliminate the risk of drowning, constant supervision remains critical - avoid swimming alone.

To help prevent illness and injury from recreational water use, Public Health Units inspect and test public beaches during swimming season. Municipal beaches are tested regularly, and other popular public-access beaches may be tested if there's a health risk. Water is tested for E. coli, which signals recent contamination from sources like swimmers, weather, wildlife, runoff, sewage, or boats. Check online ahead to see if the beach you are interested in visiting is either open, or posted. When the beach is "posted", a sign is put up. The sign is removed when further tests show that the water is safe for swimming again.

## **Vector-borne disease prevention**

Spending time outdoors in the warmer months is something to look forward to, but it's important to protect yourself from the risks that come with [ticks and mosquitoes](#). Ticks and mosquitos present some unique risks - they can carry vector-borne diseases like [West Nile virus](#) and [Lyme disease](#). Mosquitoes and ticks are most active from spring through fall, especially in wooded or grassy areas. Populations most at risk include individuals who spend a lot of time outdoors, such as hikers, campers, gardeners, and outdoor workers. To stay informed, check local public health updates and resources for information on tick and mosquito activity in your area.

To reduce your risk, apply a Health Canada approved [insect repellent](#) containing DEET or icaridin to exposed skin and clothing. Wear long sleeves, pants, socks, and closed shoes when spending time outside, particularly at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Light-colored clothing can help you spot ticks more easily, and tucking your pants into your socks adds an extra layer of protection. After outdoor activities, do a full-body tick check and shower within two hours to help remove any ticks that may have latched on. Keep mosquitoes away by repairing window screens and eliminating standing water around your home.

## **Contacts**

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