

# Cooling Centers and COVID-19

High temperatures are a major threat to the public's health. Exposure to high temperatures or extreme heat, humidity and poor air quality can cause a variety of health problems, including heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and even death. Cooling Centers are locations designated to provide relief and safety during high temperatures for those who do not have a cool place or air conditioning. It is one way the County, cities, and non-profit groups protect the public's health during heat events. Even as vaccination coverage increases in L.A. County, prevention measures are still necessary as the use of Cooling Centers can potentially become settings for increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 among visitors and staff.

## 1. What is a Cooling Center?

Cooling Centers are places in a community where you can cool down during hot weather, especially if you do not have access to air conditioning. Cooling Centers include indoor air-conditioned government owned facilities such as libraries, community, and senior centers.

## 2. Is it safe to go to Cooling Centers?

The health and safety of staff and visitors at Cooling Centers is the highest priority. The County has developed modifications to Cooling Center plans to assure that they can be safely operated during times of high heat and which comply with current Health Officer orders. These precautions include:

- **Admission.** Symptom screening will be provided for all visitors and staff, including any volunteers, vendors, contractors, or other workers entering the Cooling Center. All staff should be screened for symptoms at the beginning of their shift.
- **Face Masks.** Masks are required for everyone in a Cooling Center, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status. No staff or guest will be allowed to enter a cooling center without a mask, except for children under age 2 and those who have been instructed not to wear a mask by their medical provider. More information can be found here: <http://ph.lacounty.gov/masks/#notwear>.
- **Communication.** Signage will be posted throughout Cooling Centers reminding staff and visitors of key protective actions including: the proper way to wear face masks (nose and mouth covered), washing hands, and covering sneezes and coughs.
- **Prevention Supplies.** Hand sanitizer will be placed at entrances and common areas. Bathrooms will be adequately stocked with supplies for hand washing with soap and water.
- **Meals.** Bottled water will be available. Visitors will be advised to bring their own food and beverages. Food deliveries will be allowed. There will be no refrigerator or storage area for food. Sharing meals will not be allowed, except with household members. Visitors who wish to eat or drink at the Cooling Center will be asked to eat or drink only while seated in a designated area. Masks may only be removed temporarily while visitors are actively eating or drinking. Otherwise, masks must be worn at all times.
- **Cleaning.** Cooling Centers will follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cleaning and disinfecting guidelines for community facilities, and cleaning facilities if someone is sick.

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### 3. Why is spending time in air-conditioned places important?

During hot weather, particularly during multiple days of constant heat and high overnight temperatures, spending at least a few hours in air conditioning each day can help reduce the risk of heat-related illness. Air conditioning is especially important if you are older, have very young children, or have [certain health conditions](#).

### 4. What is heat-related illness?

Heat-related illness occurs when the body is unable to cool itself. The most common heat-related illnesses are heat or sun stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat rash. [Learn more about identifying the symptoms of heat-related illness and what to do.](#)

### 5. What other steps should I take to cool off during extreme heat?

If you cannot get to a Cooling Center, try closing window shades and curtains, drinking plenty of water or nonalcoholic and caffeine-free liquids, taking a cool shower or bath, limiting strenuous activities, and avoiding use of your stove or oven.

### 6. Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions, please contact 211 for assistance.

### For more information

For more information and advice, please visit the County's *Stay Healthy in the Heat* webpage at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/climatechange/ExtremeHeat.htm>.