

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.

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. Are cooling centers open during the pandemic?

Yes, because many locations, such as libraries, community and recreation centers, and private businesses like coffee shops, shopping malls, or movie theatres, are temporarily closed due to the pandemic. You can get information on a [cooling center near you here](#), or you can call 211.

3. Is it safe to go to cooling centers?

The health and safety of staff and visitors at cooling centers is our number one priority. The County has developed modifications to cooling center plans with the cities to assure that they can be safely operated during times of high heat and which comply with Health Officer orders and requirements for physical (social) distancing. These precautions include:

- Admission. Staff and visitors will be instructed to stay home if they do not feel well. Any person reporting or exhibiting signs of illness will be asked to leave and to seek appropriate medical care.
- Face Coverings. No guest or staff will be allowed at cooling centers without the use of a face covering, except for young children under age 2.
- Physical Distancing. Staff and visitors will be advised to practice physical (social) distancing by standing at least six feet away from other persons, except for household members. Tables, chairs and other physical layouts will be arranged to ensure appropriate distancing. The maximum occupancy will be reduced by at least half to prevent crowding.
- Communication. Signage will be posted throughout cooling centers reminding staff and visitors of key protective actions including: the proper way to wear face coverings (nose and mouth covered), washing hands, covering sneezes and coughs, and avoiding touching their face.

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- 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. Guests 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.
- Cleaning. Cooling centers will follow cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Frequently contacted surfaces like door handles, handrails, counters, seating, bathrooms, and floors will be cleaned more often. Trash will be collected and disposed of regularly.

4. 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](#).

5. 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](#).

6. 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 trying to avoid using a stove or oven.

7. 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>.