

Summer 2026

✓ MetroPlus  
HealthGold

# Health NEWS

## Help kids stay active this summer

PAGE 3

## What does a fast heartbeat mean?

PAGE 4

## The hidden risks of vaping

PAGE 6

## 4 red-flag signs of colon cancer

PAGE 8



VISIT US AT [METROPLUS.ORG](https://www.metroplus.org)

Do you speak a language other than English? MetroPlusHealth has Member Services staff who speak your language. If you need help making an appointment, call the Member Services Department at **877.475.3795 (TTY: 711)**.



© 2026. WebMD Ignite. Printed in USA. 11087A

# How to protect kids in extreme heat

As summer temperatures rise, extreme heat can affect anyone. Children are especially sensitive to high temperatures, which can take a toll on their health. In some cases, heat-related illness can even lead to an emergency department visit. Here's how to help keep your kids safe this summer.

## Little ones at risk

Everyone should watch out for extreme heat, but kids are at increased risk — especially when the heat index reaches 90 degrees or higher. Because of their smaller size, children are more likely than adults to develop heat-related illness and lose fluids quickly. They also spend more time outside and may forget to take breaks to drink water.

## Prioritizing prevention

Experts know that kids who play outside are happier and healthier. But on sweltering days, use common sense. To help prevent heat-related problems:

- Encourage kids to drink plenty of water on hot days. Make it fun: Use bendy straws or ice cubes in playful shapes. And slice fruit like oranges or strawberries to add healthy flavor.
- When possible, avoid the sun's strongest rays. Find playgrounds with shady areas. And try to schedule outdoor activities in morning or evening hours.
- Make sure they have weather-appropriate clothing. Loose, lightweight materials in light colors are best.
- Cool off in water. Run through the sprinkler. Visit the local pool. Give your little one a cool bath after time outdoors.
- Instill break time. Call kids inside periodically to cool off and rehydrate.



## Keeping watch

Soaring temperatures can cause **heat-related illnesses**, including dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke — a medical emergency. If you suspect a problem, move your child to a cooler environment and call your pediatrician right away. Symptoms may include:

- Flushed skin
- Dizziness or fainting
- Fever
- Extreme fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Faster-than-normal breathing
- Weakness or muscle cramps

## Smart sips for kids

The healthiest drinks are water and plain fat-free or low-fat milk. Here are the daily guidelines:

- 5 to 8 years: 16–40 oz water; up to 20 oz milk
- 9 to 13 years: 22–61 oz water; up to 24 oz milk
- 14 to 18 years: 29–88 oz water; up to 24 oz milk

# Fun ways to stay active over summer break

The lazy days of summer are almost here. With the lure of long mornings of sleeping in and no schoolwork, it can be hard to keep your kids mentally and physically active. Here are some ideas to help them stay busy through the summer months.

## Get them moving

All kids need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Try these tips:

- Schedule family time for exercise. Take a walk after dinner or shoot hoops in the park. Find something you all like to do and make it a habit.
- Assign chores. Teens and tweens can help with household chores, like vacuuming, dusting, cleaning their rooms, or washing the car.
- Sign them up for a new sport or activity at your local youth center or community center.
- Summer camps are a great way for kids to stay active. Look for low-cost camps in your community.

## Keep them thinking

Keeping your kids' minds active over the summer will help them retain learning skills when it's time to go back to school in the fall. Here are some ideas:

- **Limit video games and TV time.** While guidelines on limiting screen time are more direct for younger kids, **screen time recommendations** for teens can vary. What's consistent is the need for balancing digital time with other activities and mindfulness in screen time use.
- **Take advantage of activities and camps.** These don't just keep your kids physically active. They offer places for kids of all ages to make new friends and learn.

- **Look into summer learning programs.** Does your teen need extra help in math or reading? Summer programs can make a difference in learning loss and improve their skills. Some may be available through their school year-round.
- **Encourage reading.** NYC libraries offer fun summer programs and events. Learn more [here](#).
- **Take a field trip.** Visit a museum, aquarium, zoo, or other attraction to learn something new.
- **Find a summer job.** A summer job will not only keep teens busy but can also teach them new skills. Teens must be at least 14 years old to legally work at most jobs. But even younger kids can get jobs like babysitting or helping neighbors with pets or yard work.



# What a fast heartbeat can mean

Your heart is always working in the background — speeding up when you exercise, slowing down while you sleep, and adjusting to life's ups and downs. Getting to know what your normal heartbeat feels like can make it easier to tell when something is simply a natural reaction ... or when it might be worth a closer look.

## Know your baseline

A healthy resting heart rate can vary from person to person, so it's important to know what's normal for you. For most adults, a resting heart rate falls between 60 and 100 beats per minute.

Smart devices can track your heart's rhythm and can even alert you when something looks different. You can also check your pulse manually. To do so, place your index and middle finger on the inside of your wrist, count the beats for 30 seconds, and multiply by two.

Talk with your doctor about your target range. Factors such as age, fitness level, medications, and other health conditions can all influence what's considered normal.

## Listen to your heart

A fast or fluttering heartbeat can have different causes. Sometimes, it's a response to stress or anxiety. It may be due to habits such as

caffeine, alcohol, or nicotine use, or to factors like poor sleep, dehydration, illness, or hormone changes. In some cases, it is caused by an abnormal heart rhythm, called an arrhythmia, when the heart beats too fast, slow, or irregularly.

If you notice heart palpitations, or your smart device flags a concern, check in with your doctor. While it might not signal an emergency, a physical exam can help determine if anything else is going on. If an arrhythmia is found, early treatment can help prevent complications later on.

Take note of other symptoms that accompany a fast or fluttering heartbeat, like:

- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Fainting

If you experience chest pain or pressure, or exhibit signs of stroke, call 911 right away.

By paying attention to your heart and acting when something feels off, you're taking a simple step to protect your health, one beat at a time.



## No device? You can still check your pulse

It's easy to manually check your pulse at your wrist. To watch a step-by-step video, click [here](#).

# Animal-inspired workouts (that actually work)

You don't need a gym to train like an animal. These body-weight drills boost strength, endurance, and overall fitness. Plus, they're fun enough that the rest of the family might want to join in!

Do all four exercises, then repeat the circuit as many times as you can in 10 minutes.

## ❶ Flamingo stand

**What it works:** Balance, core, calves, hips

**How to do it:**

- While standing, shift your weight to your right foot.
- Lift your left knee to hip height, keeping your left foot straight and flexed.
- Hold for 10–15 seconds.
- Put your foot down and shake out your legs.
- Repeat three more times on the left. Then do the opposite side.

## ❷ Bear crawl

**What it works:** Coordination, stability, core, shoulders

**How to do it:**

- Start on all fours with your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips.
- Lift your knees about an inch or two off the ground.
- Keeping your back flat and core tight, move your right hand and left foot forward a step. Then move your left hand and right foot forward.
- Take a total of four steps forward before reversing to crawl four steps backward and repeat.



## ❸ Frog jump

**What it works:** Mobility (hips, knees, and ankles), lower body, core

**How to do it:**

- Stand with your feet wider than shoulder width, toes slightly turned out.
- Sit into a deep squat with arms out in front of you and your fingertips touching or close to the floor.
- Push the ground away with your feet and jump into the air. Land softly back into the deep squat.
- *Optional:* Instead of jumping in place, move forward, backward, or side to side.
- Aim for five to 15 frog jumps.

## ❹ Cobra pose

**What it works:** Flexibility and strengthening, chest, shoulders, spine

**How to do it:**

- Lie on your stomach with your feet hip-width apart.
- Place your hands flat on the floor, elbows bent at a 90-degree angle.
- Push into your hands, draw your shoulders back, and slowly lift your chest.
- Come up only as far as is comfortable; keep your hips and legs pressed into the floor.
- Hold for five to 10 breaths, then gently lower back down.

Sign up for a free fitness class

Shape Up NYC offers yoga, circuit training, Zumba, and more. To search for a free class near you, click [here](#).

# The hidden risks of vaping

Vaping has settled into a comfortable gray zone for a lot of people. For some, it may feel harmless compared to smoking. But there is no safe tobacco product — and science continues to back that up, with new findings linking vaping to prediabetes.

## What researchers are noticing

A study recently analyzed more than 1.2 million responses from a survey of adults across the United States. The focus was simple: how vaping and smoking relate to prediabetes.

Here's what stood out when they compared different groups:

- **People who vaped** were more likely to have prediabetes than people who never smoked at all.
- **People who smoked cigarettes** saw an even higher risk.
- **People who both smoked and vaped** carried the greatest risk for prediabetes.

The likely culprit in all this? Nicotine. Smoking cigarettes is already known to increase chances of getting diabetes, in part because nicotine can interfere with insulin and raise your blood sugar. And most e-cigarettes also deliver nicotine — bringing that same risk factor into play.

## A chance to change

Prediabetes often develops quietly. There usually aren't clear warning signs, and many people feel fine until blood sugar has been creeping up for years. That's why findings like these matter. They shine a light on risks early, when there's still time to change course.

## Support for quitting

If you are thinking about quitting, there's no "right" way to do it. What matters most is picking a plan you can follow.



No matter what you choose, strategies for success include:

- **Removing triggers when you're ready.** That may mean getting rid of vape pens, cartridges, ashtrays, or lighters that make it easier to slip back into old habits.
- **Using tools to manage cravings.** Nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs), quit-support apps, and text programs can help reduce day-to-day friction.
- **Getting expert guidance.** A doctor can help you map out a quit plan and suggest FDA-approved NRTs to try.

**Remember:** Any step toward a nicotine-free life is a step worth taking.

## We can help you quit

To take advantage of MetroPlusHealth's smoking- and vaping-cessation resources, click [here](#). You can also visit the [New York State Quitline](#), or call **866.697.8487** to apply for a free starter kit of nicotine medications.

**Caution:** You can't always trust the packaging. Some e-cigarettes marketed as nicotine-free have been proven to contain nicotine.

# How stress can raise your stroke risk

Under pressure? You're not alone — many people say they're so stressed they can barely function.

Researchers found that stress at home, at work, or with money can lead to strokes. In fact, facing several trying periods increases the risk of having a stroke.

While some stressors are beyond your control, you can work to address others. Plus, developing healthy coping skills can strengthen your resilience and protect your health.

## How stress can cause strokes

Strokes occur when blood flow to your brain is limited. Sustained stress can contribute by changing the way your cardiovascular and nervous systems function. For instance, experts hypothesize that prolonged stress may cause plaque to build up in your arteries, narrowing them.

A sudden stressor, meanwhile, could cause blood vessels to constrict further. Plaque may come loose, then lodge elsewhere, blocking blood from reaching your brain.



Over time, stress may contribute to strokes indirectly, too. Some people may choose harmful ways of coping, or they may fall away from healthy lifestyle habits. For instance, they may drink more alcohol or stop exercising, both of which also raise stroke risk.

## Build your resilience

Overcoming obstacles encourages growth. The key is to change what you can and develop skills to better withstand the rest. Here's how:

**At home:** Remove extra, unnecessary stressors. For instance, you might lower standards around housecleaning or enlist family members to help with chores. Prioritize healthy habits, such as physical activity and good sleep, which both defuse stress and reduce stroke risk.

**With money:** Take stock of your situation. Make plans with your family for budgeting and saving. If necessary, reach out to utilities or your credit card company about payment plans.

**At work:** The more control you have on the job, the less stress you're likely to feel. Ask your employer about options, including flexible working hours. If your workplace has problem-solving committees, ask to join them.

**Anywhere:** Build a support system of people you trust. Reaching out to friends, family, and mental health professionals, when needed, creates a buffer against stress and its effects.

## Feeling overwhelmed?

If stress, anxiety, or poor sleep are affecting your well-being, MetroPlusHealth can connect you with behavioral health and wellness resources — in person or through a **Virtual Visit**.

4

# RED-FLAG SYMPTOMS OF COLON CANCER YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE

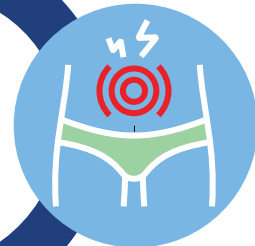
Colon cancer isn't just for older adults. In fact, cases of *early-onset colon cancer*, which is diagnosed before age 50, have been on the rise for decades. Here's what you need to know.

## 4 SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

Recent research shows that the most common warning signs associated with early-onset colon cancer are:

1

STOMACH PAIN



2

DIARRHEA

RECTAL BLEEDING



3

IRON-DEFICIENCY ANEMIA\*



4

**Don't delay if you have these symptoms. Talk with your doctor immediately.**

\* lack of enough iron in your body, which can be diagnosed through blood tests

## PROTECT YOUR HEALTH WITH COLON CANCER SCREENINGS

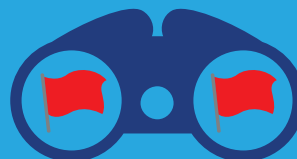


Experts recommend everyone should begin routine screening at age 45.

90%



When found and treated early, the five-year survival rate is 90%.



Always stay alert and watch for red-flag symptoms.



Ask your doctor what screening schedule is right for you and follow it.