

Share of patients with heat exhaustion increased 53 percent when comparing June 2016 to June 2021

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Among privately insured individuals receiving medical services, the percentage of patients diagnosed with heat exhaustion increased 52.5 percent when comparing June 2016 to June 2021. This was part of a general trend in which, from May to September, the percentage of patients who were diagnosed with heat stress, heat exhaustion or heatstroke was higher in each month in 2021 than in the corresponding month of 2016. These and other findings are reported in a FAIR Health brief released today, *Heat-Related Illness: A Window into Recent Trends*.

In the context of other researchers' projections that rising [summer temperatures](#) will be a source of [adverse health impacts](#) from [climate change](#), FAIR Health drew on its repository of more than 39 billion private healthcare claim records—the nation's largest such repository—to analyze recent trends and patterns in [heat-related illnesses](#) in the United States. Three types of heat-related illness—in order of increasing severity, [heat stress](#), [heat exhaustion](#) and heatstroke—were examined in the period from May through September for the years 2016-2021. Changes in percent of patients diagnosed, as well as their age and gender, were studied for each type of illness. Among the key findings:

- In the months from May through September, the greatest increase in percent of patients diagnosed for heatstroke was 40.1 percent when comparing September 2016 to September 2021.

The greatest increase for heat stress was 37.8 percent when comparing May 2016 to May 2021.

- The percentage of patients with heat stress, heat exhaustion or heatstroke diagnoses increased with age, with the greatest percentage found in the age group 65 years and older. Of patients who received [medical services](#) nationally in the 65-and-older population, 2.61 percent had a diagnosis of heat exhaustion, 1.93 percent had a diagnosis of heat stress and 0.70 percent had a diagnosis of heatstroke.
- More males than [females](#) were diagnosed with the three heat-related illnesses studied. Though the distribution was close for heat stress (males 52 percent, females 48 percent), there was greater gender disparity for heat exhaustion and heatstroke. For each of these diagnoses, males constituted 64 percent and females constituted 36 percent.
- Age was a factor in whether males or females were more likely to be diagnosed with heat stress. In individuals 36 years and older, males were more likely than females to be diagnosed; in individuals 35 years and younger, females were more likely than males to be diagnosed with heat stress. For heat exhaustion and heatstroke, males were more likely than females to be diagnosed in every age group.
- For all three heat-related illnesses studied, the largest disparity between males and females in percentage of diagnoses was in the age group 55 to 64.

FAIR Health President Robin Gelburd stated: "The findings in this report have implications for all healthcare stakeholders concerned with heat-related illnesses, including [patients](#), providers, payors and policy makers. FAIR Health hopes that these findings will also be starting points for further research on heat-related illnesses."

For the complete brief, click [here](#).

Provided by FAIR Health

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