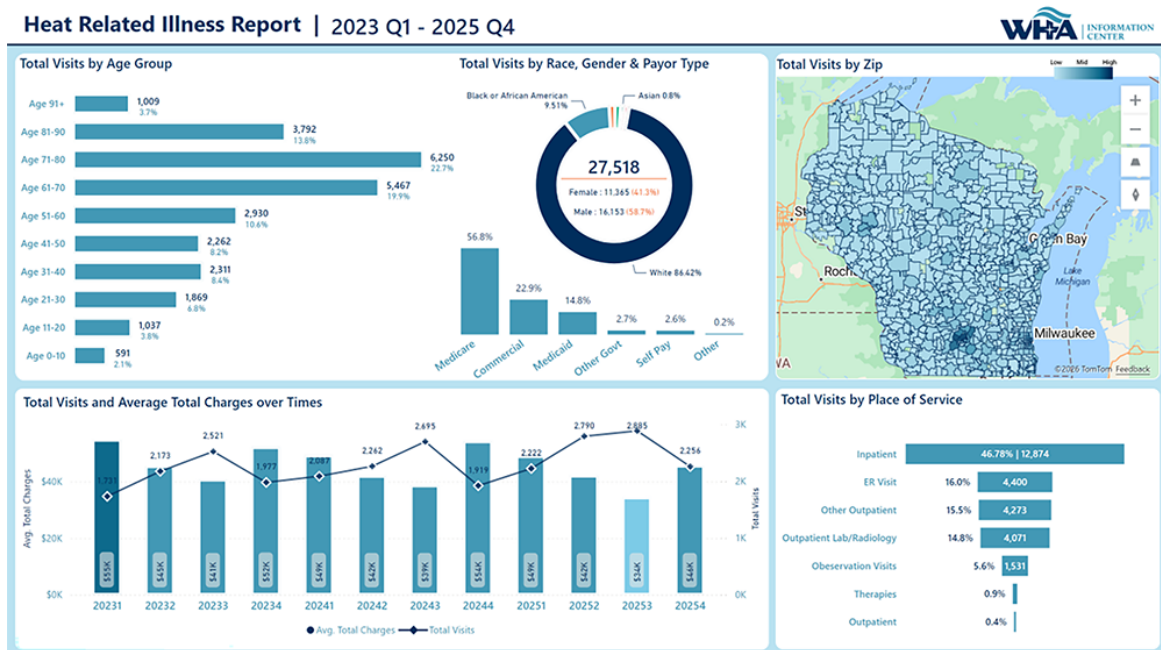


Fast Facts from the WHA Information Center: Heat-Related Illnesses

Summer in Wisconsin brings opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, but higher temperatures also increase the risk of heat-related illnesses. Conditions such as heat syncope, heat exhaustion and heat stroke are among the most serious heat-related health emergencies and can result in severe complications or death if not addressed quickly.

According to WHA Information Center data from January 2023 through December 2025, adults aged 71-80 experienced the highest number of hospital visits with heat-related illnesses and generated the highest total hospital charges among all age groups. Men accounted for approximately 59% of all heat-related illness visits during the reporting period.

The data also show that geographically, a ZIP code in Dane County recorded the highest number of heat-related illness visits statewide. Inpatient admissions represented the most common place of service, highlighting the severity of many cases requiring hospital-level care.



The impact of extreme heat extends well beyond Wisconsin. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), extreme heat causes more deaths each year than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, earthquakes and floods combined. Individuals at greatest risk include adults aged 65 and older, children younger than 4, people without access to air conditioning and those living with chronic health conditions such as heart disease.

Preventing Heat-Related Illness

As temperatures rise during Wisconsin's warmest months, health experts encourage residents to take precautions to help prevent heat-related illness. The CDC recommends the following safety measures:

- During periods of extreme heat, check frequently on older adults, people with disabilities and individuals who are homebound.
- Never leave children unattended in vehicles and ensure children cannot become trapped in enclosed spaces such as car trunks.
- Limit outdoor activity and sun exposure during peak heat hours, particularly in high-exposure settings such as beaches and lakes.
- Drink plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and replenish electrolytes lost through sweating. Salt tablets should only be taken under medical supervision.
- Dress infants and children in lightweight, loose-fitting clothing and protect them from direct sunlight with hats or umbrellas.
- Provide pets with access to fresh water and keep water dishes in shaded areas.

Awareness, preparedness and preventive action can help reduce the risk of heat-related illness and keep Wisconsin residents safe throughout the summer season.

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Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers: 2026 WHA Healthcare Workforce Well-being Summit