

August Fast Facts: Heat-Related Illnesses

Summers in Wisconsin are known for long, sun-filled days spent outdoors. However, the sun can become too powerful for human bodies and heat-related illnesses can occur. These illnesses are some of the most dangerous weather-related conditions that appear during peak heat months of July and August. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published that, “approximately 1,220 people in the United States are killed by extreme heat every year” (Heat-Related Illness, 2024). Of those heat-related illnesses, heat syncope, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are among the most severe and fatal.

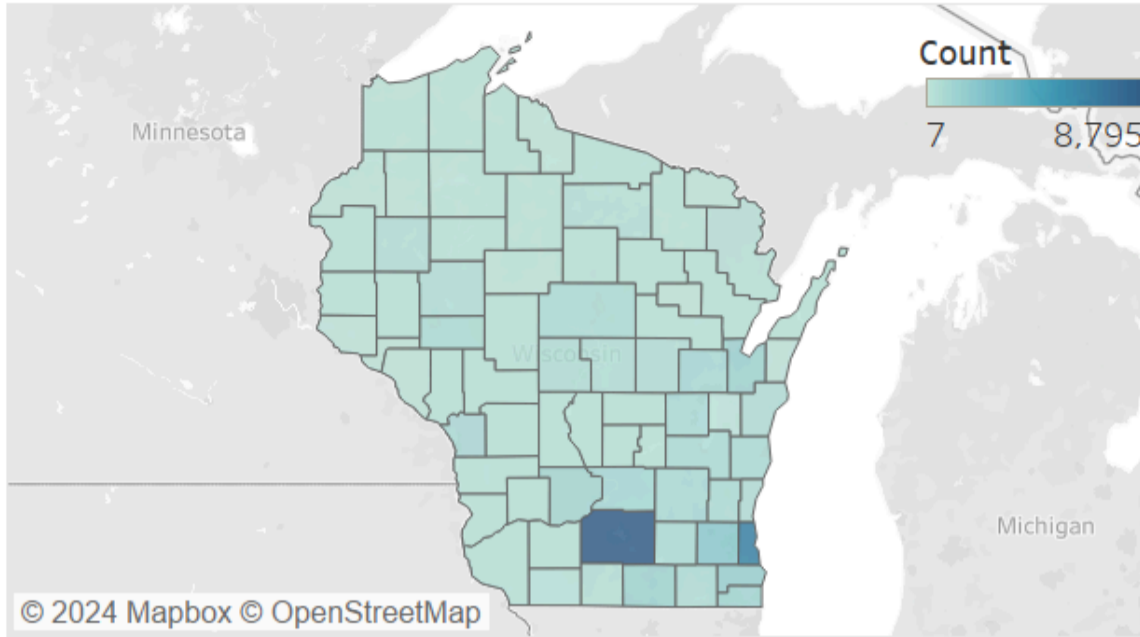
Based on WHA Information Center data from January 2019 to March 2024, patients aged 60-80 years old had the highest hospital visit counts due to a heat-related illness. The average patient age of a patient was 59 years old. Those patients aged 61-70 years old have the largest total charge amount for a hospital visit over the other age groupings. Males accounted for 59 percent of all visits. Dane County held the highest visit counts for heat-related illnesses. Inpatient admissions were the most frequent type of place of service with the highest visit count. The CDC also states that “extreme heat causes more deaths each year than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, earthquakes and floods combined” (CDC Climate Change and Extreme Heat Infographic). At risk individuals include those 65 years or older, children under the age of 4, people without air conditioning, and people with existing medical conditions like heart disease.

Whether you work outdoors or enjoy spending free time in nature, here are some key things the CDC says you can do to prevent a heat-related illness from occurring:

- During heat waves, frequently check on people at risk for heat-related death, such as the elderly and disabled or homebound people.
- Never leave children alone in cars and ensure that children cannot lock themselves in an enclosed space, such as a car trunk.
- Limit sun exposure during midday hours and in places of potential severe exposure, such as beaches or lakes.
- Drink plenty of nonalcoholic fluids, and replace the body’s salts and minerals, which sweating can release. Do not take salt tablets unless under medical supervision.
- Dress infants and children in cool, loose clothing and shade their heads and faces from the sun with hats or an umbrella.
- Provide plenty of fresh water for pets and leave the water in a shady area.

Visit Count for Heat Related Illness 2019 Q1-2024 Q1

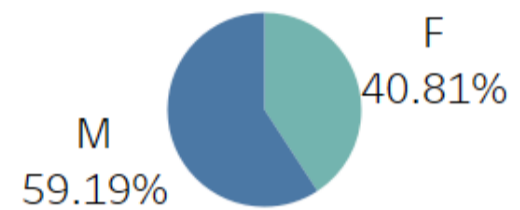
Visit Count by County



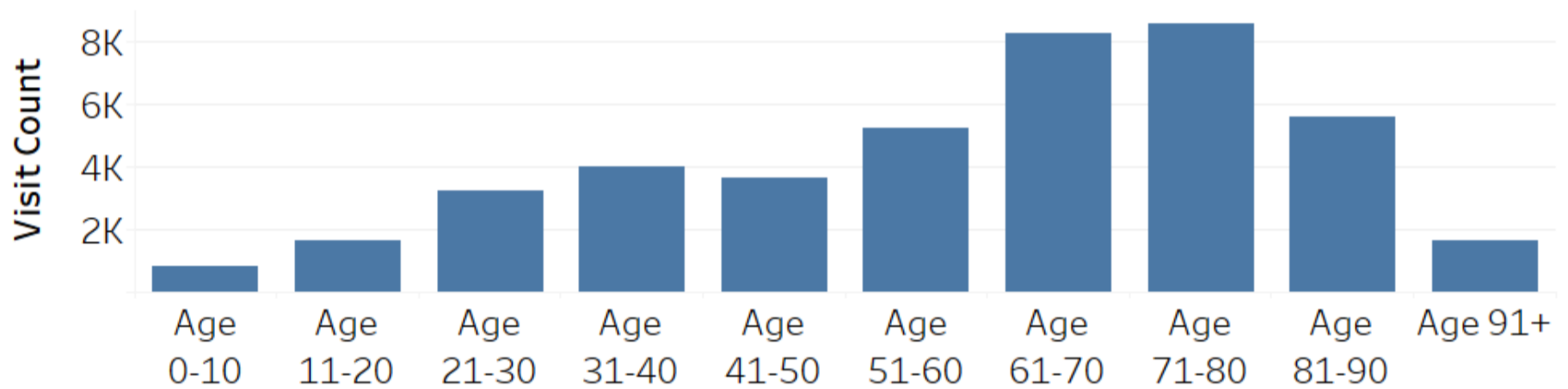
Place of Service

POS	Count
INP	20,449
EDV	6,661
OLR	6,175
OOUT	5,827
OBS	2,974

Gender



Age Group



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