

STAYING SAFE FROM HEAT

What are heat waves?

Heat waves are defined as three or more days of unusually high temperatures. However heat stress can still happen on single hot days.

What happens to the body in extreme heat?

In extreme heat, the air temperature is hotter than our body which stops us losing heat. This makes our hearts work harder. Dehydration makes it worse. When heat-stressed we feel awful, and if unchecked, our body systems fail and it can lead to death.

- Overheating and heat stress can occur quickly and without warning
- Humidity increases the risk of heat stress

How to prepare for hot days

- If your home is unsuitable, find **places** in your community where you can go to get shelter and cool down (e.g. shopping centres, movie theatres)
- For people who are **elderly** or **on regular medicines**, make a heat wave plan with your GP
- When hot days or a heatwave is **forecast**:
 - Cover windows with shades, install shutters and curtains; weather-strip doors and windows
 - Learn the symptoms and signs of heat-related illness
 - Have an emergency kit (phone numbers, local GP details, torch with spare batteries, battery operated radio, spare medicines, cool packs, water)
 - Make sure your mobile phone is charged

How to be safe during hot days

- Stay indoors; move to cooler, shaded areas inside
- Avoid strenuous activities
- When activities in the heat are necessary, limit heat exposure by establishing a work/rest schedule throughout the hour to allow your body to cool
- Wear light, loose fitting and light-coloured clothing
- Keep refrigerator stocked with cool water
- Drink plenty of water, sufficient to regularly produce pale urine
- Keep a bath full of cold water; take regular baths
- Periodically rest, with damp towels on your skin



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Who is most at risk?

Older adults; children; people who are sick or overweight; people with underlying medical conditions, especially those with heart disease; people living with poverty; people who are socially isolated; people who are physically active or work outdoors in the heat.

- Open the house to cool during nights
- Watch for heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke (see below)
- Keep pets indoors, cool and with plenty of water
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Stay connected, and check on family members, neighbours, and work colleagues

What to look out for, and how to respond

- **Heat exhaustion**
 - **Signs:** Heavy sweating; pale clammy skin; muscle cramps; tiredness; weakness; dizziness; headache; nausea or vomiting; fainting
 - **Actions:** The sufferer should go to an air-conditioned place and lie down; loosen or remove clothing; take a cool bath; take sips of cool sports drinks with salt and sugar
Have someone nearby assist and monitor the sufferer
If symptoms get worse, or last for more than an hour, call 000 for an ambulance.
- **Heat stroke – an emergency that requires ACTION!**
 - **Signs:** Extremely high body temperature; red, hot, and dry skin with no sweat; rapid, strong pulse; dizziness; confusion; unconsciousness
 - **Actions:** **Call 000 immediately;** meanwhile, until medical help arrives cool the sufferer down by whatever methods are available
However if ambulances are busy, someone else should drive the sufferer to a hospital as soon as possible.