



Extreme heat – health advice

Advice for older people

When it is very hot, you may be at increased risk of a heat-related illness, especially if you have a medical condition or take certain medicines. The following advice will help you to cope during extremely hot weather.

- Ask a family member or friend to check on you twice a day during extreme heat, especially if you live alone.

Signs of heat stress include:

- headache
- feeling dizzy, faint or weak
- increased thirst
- dark coloured urine, or urinating less often
- muscle spasms or cramps
- tiredness

If you start to feel ill with the symptoms of heat stress, you should seek medical attention by:

- calling *healthdirect* Australia on 1800 022 222
- calling your GP
- going to the Emergency Department of your nearest hospital.

If you have more serious symptoms of heat stress – vomiting, becoming confused, or having hot, red or dry skin because you have stopped sweating – immediately call 000 for an ambulance.

Keeping cool

- Keep physical activities to a minimum and rest if you feel tired.
- If you have a fan, put a bowl of ice cubes in front of it to create a cool breeze.
- If you have air-conditioning, turn it on if your home is hot. Make sure it is set to 'cool'.



- Suck ice cubes made from water or cordial.
- Wet a cloth in cool water to wipe your face, neck and arms.
- Put your feet in a bowl of cool water.
- Sleep with just a sheet over you.
- Go to an air-conditioned shopping centre or local library for some relief from the heat.

Eating and drinking

- Drink plenty of water or diluted fruit juice even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid drinking tea, coffee or alcohol.
- Have a bottle of water with you at all times to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Eat smaller meals more often during hot weather. Cold foods such as salads and fruit help keep you hydrated. Use stoves or ovens less to keep your home cooler.
- Ensure that food needing refrigeration is not left out.



Clothing and personal aids

- Light-coloured and loose-fitting clothing, preferably made from natural fibres like cotton or linen, is best to wear. Avoid clothes made from synthetic fabrics.
- If going outside, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat (at least 7.5cm wide), or a legionnaire or bucket-style hat. Make sure it shades your face, neck and ears.
- Before going back inside, make sure you take your sunglasses off and take a few minutes to let your eyes adjust from the bright sunlight.
- Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen when outdoors (minimum SPF30+), even if not outside for long.
- If you use a wheelchair, walker or any other metal equipment, keep it in the shade as it can quickly become hot to touch and could cause a burn.

Medicines

- If you take prescribed medicines you must continue to take these during times of extreme heat.
- Some medicines can make you more prone to sunburn and heat stress, so take extra care to watch for signs that you may become affected by the heat.
- Speak to your doctor or a pharmacist if you need more advice on particular medicines.

For more information, visit www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat