



Extreme heat – health advice

Preventing heat-related illness

During extremely hot weather, it is easy to become dehydrated or for your body to overheat. If this happens, you may develop heat cramps, heat exhaustion or even heatstroke which can result in irreversible damage to your body, or even death.

It is important to know the effects of extreme heat, how to avoid getting ill, and what you should do if you experience any heat-related illness.

How to avoid getting ill during the heat

- Whenever possible, stay indoors with a fan or air-conditioner on.
- If you do need to go out in the heat, try and limit your outdoor activity to early morning or evening and stay in the shade whenever you can.
- Wear lightweight, loose, comfortable clothing, a hat and plenty of sunscreen.
- Drink plenty of water to stay well hydrated. Avoid alcohol, tea coffee as these can make you more dehydrated.
- Avoid outdoor exercise or strenuous physical activity during extreme heat, especially in the middle of the day. Use common sense when exercising.

Dehydration

Symptoms

- Increased thirst
- Lethargy and tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Irritability
- Fainting or dizziness
- Dark coloured urine, or urinating less often

What you should do

- Cease activity immediately if feeling unwell and go to a cool, shaded place.
- Drink plenty of fluids (avoid tea, coffee or alcohol).
- Try to keep cool by:
 - turning on a fan or air-conditioner
 - using a spray bottle of water on the face and body.
- If you are still unwell after attempting to cool down, seek medical advice as soon as possible.



Heat cramps

Symptoms

- Muscle spasms
- Twitching
- Painful muscle cramps in the limbs or abdomen
- Moist cool skin

What you should do

- Cease activity immediately if feeling unwell and go to a cool, shaded place to lie down, with legs supported and slightly elevated.
- Drink plenty of fluids (avoid tea, coffee or alcohol).
- Try to keep cool by:
 - turning on a fan or air-conditioner
 - using a spray bottle of water or a wet towel on the face and body
 - having a cool shower or bath.
- Massage limbs gently to ease muscle spasms, or massage firmly if cramped.
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after cramps subside.
- **If remaining unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible.**



Heat exhaustion

Symptoms

- Headaches
- High temperature
- Heavy sweating
- Cold, clammy pale skin
- Fatigue, weakness and restlessness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Weak but rapid pulse
- Poor coordination
- Fast, shallow breathing

What you should do

- **Consider seeking medical assistance immediately, especially for a younger or older person. Go to the nearest hospital, or if this is not possible, call 000 for an ambulance.**
- Cease activity immediately and go to a cool, shaded place to lie down, with legs supported and slightly elevated.
- Drink plenty of fluids (avoid tea, coffee or alcohol).
- Try to keep cool by:
 - turning on a fan or air-conditioner
 - using a spray bottle of water on the face and body, or using a wet towel
 - having a cool shower or bath.
- Put cool packs under the armpits, in the groin, on the back of the neck and on the forehead to reduce body heat.
- Massage limbs gently to ease muscle spasms, or massage firmly if cramped.
- **If remaining unwell, especially if vomiting continues in a younger or older person, seek medical assistance immediately.**
- **Go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department, or if this is not possible, call 000 for an ambulance.**

Heatstroke

Symptoms

- Confusion, headaches, dizziness and nausea
- Skin flushed, hot and unusually dry
- Intense thirst
- Dry, swollen tongue
- Sudden rise in body temperature (40°C+)
- Disorientation
- Slurred speech
- Aggressive or bizarre behaviour
- Sleepiness
- Convulsions
- Unconsciousness may develop rapidly
- Seizures or coma

What you should do

- **Heat stroke is an extreme medical emergency.**
- **Ring 000 immediately for an ambulance.**
- Cease activity immediately and go to a cool, shaded place to lie down, with legs supported and slightly elevated.
- Keep still.
- Drink plenty of fluids (avoid tea, coffee or alcohol).
- Bring temperature down by any method possible:
 - sponging with cool water
 - soaking clothes in cool water
 - having a cool shower or bath.
- Put cool packs under the armpits, in the groin, on the back of the neck and on the forehead to reduce body heat.
- Do not give aspirin or paracetamol to a person affected by heat.
- **If conscious**, give small sips of water and try to keep the person calm. Stay with them until the ambulance arrives.
- **If unconscious**, check airway for breathing and monitor pulse rate until the ambulance arrives.



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