



# Extreme heat – health advice

## Caring for babies and young children people

Babies and young children are very sensitive to the effects of high temperatures and can quickly get stressed by heat.

As they rely on others to take care of them, it is very important to watch them closely and to keep them from getting hot or dehydrated.

### Signs of heat stress and what to do

Babies and young children may not show signs and symptoms of being affected by the heat even though they are.

- Signs to watch for are looking unwell, being floppy or more irritable than usual, having drier skin, refusing to drink or having fewer wet nappies than usual.
- The soft spot on top of a baby's head (fontanelle) may also be lower than usual.

**If you think your baby or young child is suffering from the heat** (with or without the above symptoms):

- call healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222
- **call your GP** and arrange to see them urgently
- **take your baby to the Emergency Department of your nearest hospital.**

### Feeding and drinking

Babies and young children are not able to tell you they are thirsty, so it is important to make sure they are getting enough to drink.

- Breastfed babies may need extra breastfeeds in hot weather, but in most cases other drinks are not needed. Small amounts of cool, boiled water can be given between feeds, especially if the baby is having other foods.
- Bottle-fed babies may need extra formula or small amounts of cool, boiled water if they seem thirsty.
- Give young children regular drinks throughout the day, ideally water. Avoid giving sugary or fizzy drinks.
- A refreshing idea for young children is to freeze fruit pieces (orange quarters, watermelon) for them to suck on – but be prepared for the sticky mess!



## Keeping cool

- Dress babies and young children in light, loose clothing (singlet and nappy, loose top).
- Regularly sponge down with lukewarm water, or try a lukewarm bath. Cool or cold water should not be used.
- Choose the coolest place in the house for babies or young children to sleep.
- Make sure air can circulate around the bassinette or cot (remove any liners or padding). Don't leave babies to sleep in a pram which can become hot.
- If you don't have a fan or air-conditioner you can cover your baby or young child's body with cool damp cloths and place wet towels or sheets around the bassinette or cot to cool the air immediately near them. Check regularly to make sure they are not getting too cold.
- If you use a fan, don't point it towards your baby or child but use it to keep the air circulating.
- If you have an air-conditioner, make sure the room does not get too cold. Monitor the temperature of your child regularly.

## Going outside or travelling in the car

Avoid taking your baby or young child out during periods of extreme heat.

- If you have to go outside, protect their skin from the sun by keeping them in the shade or by covering their skin with loose clothing and a hat.
- Use broad-spectrum baby or toddler formula sunscreen (minimum SPF30+) on skin which cannot be covered by clothing. Always check the product label before applying.
- **Babies can overheat and die very quickly in hot weather and especially in cars.** Avoid travelling when it is hot. If travel is necessary, do it early in the day.
- **Never leave babies, children, or pets alone in a car, even if the air-conditioning is on,** as they can still get stressed from the heat. Even in cool temperatures cars can heat up to dangerously high temperatures very quickly.
- Make sure a baby or young child does not have the sun shining on them when travelling in a car, or when the car is still, as this can cause overheating. As their skin is very thin, it can burn from sunlight coming through car windows, especially if their skin is not covered.
- Never cover a baby capsule in a car with a rug or towel to shade baby from the sun as this will restrict air moving around the baby, making them hotter.
- When leaving the car, check there are no children left in the car. One way to remind you that a baby or young child is in the car might be to keep a stuffed animal in the baby car seat when empty. When the child is buckled in, put the stuffed animal in the front seat next to you.



For more information, visit [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing\\_health\\_alerts/extreme\\_heat](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat)