

Summer preparedness

While many people enjoy warmer summer weather, hot weather can cause some people to become unwell through overheating (becoming uncomfortably hot), dehydration, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

People at higher risk of becoming unwell in hot weather

Anyone can become unwell when the weather is hot. However, some people are more at risk of heat-health issues than others. These include people who are:

- 65 years old and over
- living with chronic conditions and severe illness such as: heart conditions, diabetes, respiratory and renal insufficiency, Parkinson's disease, or severe mental illness
- taking medications which can affect renal function, sweating ability, electrolyte balance or thermoregulation (a process that allows your body to maintain its core internal temperature)
- unable to adapt their behaviour to keep cool, including those with Alzheimer's, people with disabilities and those who are bed bound. (Public health England & NHS England 2015).

Things you can do to help keep cool during hot weather

- Know which of your residents are most at risk from hot weather and keep a close eye on them. Observe for signs of deterioration and seek medical advice if needed.
- Know the symptoms of [heat exhaustion and heatstroke](#)
- During the daytime, draw curtains or blinds across windows to help keep the sun out.
- Open windows at night to cool buildings (ensuring there are no security issues).
- Know which rooms are easier to keep cool and where possible move residents into them.
- Place thermometers around the building to keep check on room temperatures.
- If temperatures exceed 26°C, high-risk individuals should be moved to a cool area that is 26°C or below.
- Fans are not recommended for use during airborne outbreaks of infections or when a resident is suspected or known to have an infection such as MRSA, Norovirus, *Clostridioides difficile* (CDI) or Coronavirus. For more information please see attached guidance on the use of fans.
- Make cool and/or iced water and juices available at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- Provide menus with cold meals, preferably foods with a high water content, like fruit and salads, jellies and ice cream in consultation with residents.
- Ensure residents wear light, loose fitting, and cool clothing.
- Avoid residents going outside at the hottest periods of the day, between 11am-3pm.
- Ensure staff take regular breaks and drink plenty of cool fluids also.

For more information, please see The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Hot weather and health guidance, in particular [Hot weather and health: supporting vulnerable people](#)

You can also sign up to the Heat-health Alert system which forewarns of periods of high temperatures which may affect people's health: [Heat-health Alert service - Met Office](#)

Hydration

Why are care home residents more at risk of dehydration?

- As we get older, our natural feeling of thirst declines and, if we don't feel thirsty, we can be less inclined to drink.
- If residents struggle with eating and drinking, they may only be able to eat and drink when assisted.
- If residents suffer from incontinence, they may limit the amount they drink to avoid going to the toilet and the issue of embarrassment.

Signs of dehydration can include:

- Feeling thirsty
- Dark yellow and strong smelling urine
- Feeling dizzy and lightheaded
- Feeling tired
- Dry mouth, lips, and eyes
- Reduced skin turgor (the skin's elasticity)

How much fluid should a resident in a care home drink in a day?

- The general consensus is between 1.5-2 litres of fluid a day (unless otherwise clinically indicated) or 6-8 glasses or cups of fluid a day.

Practical ways to help residents to drink:

- Remind residents of the health benefits of staying hydrated and the problems dehydration can cause.
- Support and help those residents who need assistance to eat and drink, in particular those who have Dementia or have a condition which makes it difficult for them to coordinate eating and drinking.
- Provide a range of resident's favourite drinks (at the right temperature for them) at set times throughout the day.
- Social occasions with family, friends and other residents in the home can be a good time to encourage residents to drink.
- Some residents may like to have a favourite cup or glass close to hand so that they can sip fluids, little and often.
- When giving medication, encourage residents to take one pill at a time with a sip of water or their favourite juice.
- Encourage residents to eat foods with a high water content, such as soups, jellies, smoothies, milk puddings and fruit.
- Throughout the day regularly support residents to go to the toilet

Ensuring staff take proper breaks to stay hydrated is also very important.

IPC Advice, Support, Information & Resources:

- Advice, support, and information for care home staff on the management of all infections: E.g., Covid 19; MRSA; CDI; *E. coli*; Scabies
- Advice & support to undertake a range of care home IPC audits to national standard.
- Support safe hospital discharge for residents who have been treated for an infection.
- IPC annual training programme (2023/24) & bespoke IPC courses for care home managers, clinical staff, IPC link champions, care and domestic staff.
- Advice & support on new builds & extensions to meet IPC specifications.

A wide range of excellent **IPC policies and procedures** are available to help you to manage infections in your care homes. Please follow the link below: [Care Services Cumberland - Policies and Procedures | Cumbria County Council](#)

Training Dates for Your Diary

June

- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024
Wednesday 26th June 10am-11.30am [Click here to join the meeting](#)

July

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2024
Tuesday 2nd July 1pm-3.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024
Tuesday 23rd July 2pm-3.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)