



One minute guide to...

Summer Well-being Part 1: HEATWAVES

Why is it important to be aware?

We all look forward to hot weather and summer can be a wonderful season, with lots of time spent outside enjoying the sunshine and warm weather. However, when it is too hot there may be health risks, so it is important to know how to make sure it doesn't harm you or anyone you know.

Hot weather places a strain on the heart and lungs. For that reason, the majority of serious illness and deaths caused by heat are respiratory and cardiovascular. Older people, those with pre-existing health conditions and young children are particularly at risk.

Overexposure to the sun is equally dangerous, with effects ranging from mild sunburn to skin cancer. It doesn't have to be hot for the UV index to be high. The main risks posed by a heatwave are dehydration (not drinking enough); overheating (increasing symptoms if individuals have problems with their breathing or heart); heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

What to do: Indoors?

- Close blinds / curtains, but do not let them block window ventilation. OPEN windows as early as possible in the morning but CLOSE windows when the outdoor air becomes warmer than the air indoors – this should help keep the heat out while allowing adequate ventilation
- All electrical equipment, including computers, monitors and printers should be switched off when not in use and should not be left in 'standby mode' as this generates heat
- If possible, use those rooms or other spaces which are less likely to overheat, and adjust the layout of any rooms to avoid direct sunlight on children
- Oscillating mechanical fans can be used to increase air movement if temperatures are below 35°C. Above 35°C fans may not prevent heat-related illness and may worsen dehydration

Outdoors?

- On very hot days (i.e. if over 30°C) children, older adults or vulnerable individuals should not take part in vigorous physical activity. Try to avoid the hottest parts of the day (11.00-15.00hrs)
- Avoid being in the sun for long periods
- Stay in the shade as much as possible
- Loose, light coloured, thin clothing should be worn to help keep cool and sunhats with wide brims should be worn to avoid sunburn alongside sunscreen (Factor 15 or above) that should be re-applied regularly
- Everyone must be encouraged to drink more than usual when conditions are hot, but not alcohol which dehydrates the body

General advice?

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke: For more information on the [common signs and symptoms](#)

Hand hygiene: It is very important to wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water (or sanitiser if not available) to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases particularly when you come in from outside, after you have blown your nose/sneezed, and when you are preparing food.

Reduce respiratory problems: If you use an inhaler, ensure you carry it with you during hot dry periods. This is important, because during dry periods, air quality may be poor and pollen counts could also be high which can affect respiratory conditions.

Sunburn: information can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sunburn/>

Further Information:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beat-the-heat-hot-weather-advice/beat-the-heat-staying-safe-in-hot-weather>
2. NHS advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/heatwave-how-to-cope-in-hot-weather/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/>

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