

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 cope during extremely hot weather.

- > Ask a family member or friend to check on you twice a day if possible during extreme heat, especially if you live alone.
- > If you have no-one who can call on you, you can register for the free Telecross REDi Service on 1800 188 071. A trained Red Cross volunteer will then call you up to 3 times a day to make sure you are well and coping with the heat.

Symptoms of heat stress include:

- > headache
- > feeling dizzy, faint or weak
- > profuse sweating
- > urinating less often
- > muscle spasms or cramps
- > nausea

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

- > contacting your GP
- > calling healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222; or
- > 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 air conditioning, turn it on if your home is hot. Make sure it is set to cool.
- > If you use a fan, put a bowl of ice cubes in front of it to create a cool breeze.
- > 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.
- > Try to go to an air conditioned shopping centre or local library if you can for some relief from the heat.

Eating and drinking

- > Drink plenty of water or 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 meals 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, 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 that shades your face and neck. 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 sunscreen when outdoors, 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 on how to cope during extreme heat

Emergency Management Unit

www.health.sa.gov.au

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