

Healthy in the Heat

A guide to coping
with hot weather
and extreme heat



Government
of South Australia

SA Health

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1 INTRODUCTION

During the summer months, South Australia can experience long periods of hot weather and extreme heat.

Everyone is at risk of heat-related illness during hot weather and extreme heat, and some groups – like the elderly, babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with existing physical and mental health conditions – are more at risk than others.

This guide has been produced to help you to care for yourself and others when the weather is hot. It gives advice on:

- > what heat-related illness is
- > how to get ready for hot weather and extreme heat
- > how you can reduce your risk of becoming unwell
- > what to do if you or someone you know has a heat-related illness
- > what to do in an emergency and the treatment to give while waiting for an ambulance
- > how to keep safe and well after a period of hot weather.

In a medical emergency, always call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

WHAT IS EXTREME HEAT?

Extreme heat or 'heatwave' is weather where the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded are much hotter than usual.

The State Emergency Service (the SES) is the control agency for severe weather in South Australia. Throughout the summer, the Bureau of Meteorology predicts average daily temperatures and how high daily temperatures will affect your health. It then works with the SES to issue alerts and warnings.

If extremely hot weather is forecast and is predicted to last for a number of days and nights, the SES will issue an Extreme Heat Warning.

South Australia can experience long periods of extreme heat, so it is important to know:

- > what the effects of extreme heat are
- > who is at risk
- > how you can prepare for it and cope.

For more information about Extreme Heat Warnings and the SES Extreme Heat Plan, visit www.ses.sa.gov.au.

Check radio, television and online news regularly for information and advice.

How does EXTREME HEAT

Extreme heat is more than just 'hotter than usual' weather.



When temperatures are hotter than 35°C, your body may not be able to cool you down enough for you to stay healthy, especially if you are an older person or if you are taking medicines for existing conditions.



In extreme heat, you are more likely to develop a heat-related illness and become unwell much faster than you would when in warm or hot weather.

In addition to the steps we should all take when the weather is hot, during extreme heat it is vital that you:



Stay indoors as much as you can and turn fans and air-conditioners on earlier in the day to stop the heat from building in your home.



If you must go outside, try to do it early in the morning or in the evening when the temperatures are a little cooler.



Check radio, television and online news regularly for information and advice from SA Health about how to stay healthy in extreme heat.



Follow your doctor's advice about your medical conditions and keep taking your prescribed medicines regularly.

differ to HOT WEATHER?



If you must go outside during the day, always wear long, loose-fitting clothing, apply plenty of SPF30+ sunscreen, and use a hat or an umbrella for shade.



Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty, and carry a bottle of water with you if you do have to go out.



Keep physical activity to a minimum and scale back your exercise routine until after extreme heat has passed.



Make sure that someone is available to visit friends or relatives who are elderly or who have pre-existing medical conditions at least twice a day to make sure they are coping.



Cool yourself down by taking a cool shower or bath when you feel hot.

2 HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

It is easy to become overheated and dehydrated in hot weather, which can lead to serious conditions and illnesses like heat exhaustion and, in extreme cases, heatstroke.

DEHYDRATION, CRAMPS and FAINTING OR DIZZINESS

The signs of heat-related conditions like dehydration, cramps and fainting or dizziness include:

- > sweating heavily
- > having a temperature
- > being tired and lethargic
- > having little appetite
- > being thirsty
- > being irritable
- > twitching or having painful muscle cramps in the arms, legs or abdomen
- > having moist, cool skin.



If you or someone you know is showing these signs and feeling unwell:

- > stop what you are doing, go to a cool, shaded place and lie down
- > drink plenty of water or other fluids, avoiding caffeine and alcohol
- > try to cool down with a fan or an air-conditioner, a cool damp towel around your neck, cool water sprayed on your skin or by having a cool shower or bath
- > use massage to ease any spasms or cramps, then use ice packs
- > if still unwell after taking these steps, seek medical advice as soon as possible.



ARE YOU DRINKING ENOUGH WATER?

THE COLOUR OF YOUR URINE CAN TELL YOU IF YOU ARE DRINKING ENOUGH WATER OR IF YOU ARE DEHYDRATED.



VERY DEHYDRATED

Drink a large bottle of water straight away



DEHYDRATED

Drink two to three glasses of water now



SOMEWHAT DEHYDRATED

Drink a large glass of water now



HYDRATED

You are drinking enough water – keep drinking water at the same rate

HEAT EXHAUSTION AND HEATSTROKE



More serious heat-related illnesses include heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Both conditions can be made worse if the person suffering them has a heart (cardiovascular) disease or if they are taking some types of medicines.

During extreme heat, it is vital to check on vulnerable family and friends at least twice a day to check that they are coping and that they have everything they need to stay healthy in the heat.

Heat exhaustion

The signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- > headaches
- > having a temperature
- > sweating heavily
- > cold, clammy, pale skin
- > fatigue, weakness and restlessness
- > nausea and vomiting
- > weak but rapid pulse
- > poor coordination.

Heatstroke

Heatstroke is an extreme medical emergency. If not treated immediately, it can lead to permanent damage to vital organs or even death.

If you notice any of the following signs of heatstroke in yourself or others, call 000 immediately for an ambulance:

- > headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting and confusion
- > having flushed, hot and unusually dry skin
- > being extremely thirsty
- > having a dry, swollen tongue
- > having a sudden rise in body temperature to more than 40°C
- > being disoriented or delirious
- > experiencing slurred speech
- > being aggressive or behaving strangely
- > experiencing convulsions, seizures or coma.

If you or someone you know is showing the signs of heat exhaustion or heatstroke:

- > stop what you are doing, go to a cool, shaded place and lie down with legs supported and slightly lifted
- > slowly sip plenty of water or fruit juice, avoiding caffeine and alcohol
- > try to cool down with a fan or an air-conditioner, cool water sprayed on skin or by having a cool shower or bath
- > reduce body temperature by putting cool packs under the armpits, in the groin and on the back of the neck
- > use massage to ease spasms or cramps, then use ice packs.

Emergency treatment for a person affected by the heat

Heatstroke is an extreme medical emergency.

If you think you or someone else is suffering from heatstroke, call 000 immediately for an ambulance.

Heatstroke can happen suddenly and quickly lead to unconsciousness.

While waiting for the ambulance to arrive:

- > if possible, move the person to somewhere cool and keep them still
- > loosen their clothes, sprinkle them with cool water, or wrap them in a damp sheet
- > place cool, damp cloths in their armpits, on the back of their neck and on their forehead to cool them down as quickly as possible
- > use a fan to help cool them down if one is available
- > do not give aspirin or paracetamol to a person affected by heat.

If the person is conscious:

- > try to keep them calm
- > give them small sips of water or fruit juice
- > stay with them until the ambulance arrives.

If the person is unconscious:

- > check their airway is clear
- > monitor their pulse rate
- > stay with them until the ambulance arrives.

In this section you will find tips for everybody, as well as specific advice about caring for people who are very vulnerable to hot weather and heat-related illness.

On the following pages, you will find more advice for people who may be especially vulnerable to hot weather and extreme heat.

3 GETTING PREPARED FOR SUMMER

There are some simple steps you can take to reduce your chances of becoming affected by the heat and unwell during very hot weather.

Before summer begins



Check your fans and air-conditioners to make sure they are working and that filters and air vents are clean.



Put together a small emergency kit, including a torch, batteries, a first aid kit and a list of important telephone numbers.



If you have been using a reverse-cycle air-conditioner, make sure it is set to 'cool' before summer begins.



Think about how you will look after your pets and keep them healthy and cool when the weather gets really hot.



Learn the signs of heat related illness so you can respond quickly if you or someone you know becomes sick.



Make a plan for keeping in regular contact with friends and neighbours when it is very hot in case you or they need help.



If you regularly take medicines, check with your doctor about whether they will affect what you should do when it gets very hot.



Make sure you have food and other groceries at home so you are less likely to have to go out when it is really hot.

4

HOT WEATHER is HERE

In this section you will find tips for everybody, as well as specific advice about caring for people who are very vulnerable to hot weather and heat-related illness.

Simple healthy in the heat steps for everybody

Here are some simple steps we should all take to help us to stay healthy in the heat:



Drink plenty of fluids – water is best. Avoid caffeine and alcohol.



Try to avoid going outside during the hottest part of the day.



Stay indoors as much as you can with a fan or air-conditioner on.



If you prefer to exercise outside, do it early in the day when it is cooler.



Check local weather forecasts so you know when hot weather is coming and you can plan ahead.



If you have been prescribed medicines, keep taking them regularly.



If you do have to go outside during the day, try to wear long, loose-fitting clothing and a hat, and use plenty of SPF30+ sunscreen.



Keep curtains, blinds and windows closed during the day to keep your home cool.

HOT WEATHER and PREGNANCY



If you are pregnant, it is important for your health and the health of your baby that you follow the tips in this guide when the weather is hot.

During pregnancy, most women have higher body temperatures, making them more sensitive to heat in hot weather.

For this reason, pregnant women need to take extra steps to make sure they and their unborn babies do not overheat.



If you feel unwell because of the heat, it is important that you stop what you are doing and lie down in a cool, air-conditioned room.



If your symptoms continue, speak with your General Practitioner, obstetrician, midwife or the maternity unit where you plan to give birth for specific medical advice.



Lying and sleeping on your left side will mean that more blood and nutrients will reach the placenta and your baby.

In a medical emergency, always call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

HOT WEATHER and EXERCISING



Staying healthy in hot weather may mean you have to change your exercise routine to reduce your risk of heat-related illness.

When the weather is hot, it is important to:



Use common sense – exercise moderately and, if you start to feel ill, slow down and stop.



If you like to **exercise outside**, do it early in the day when the temperature is cooler and try to stay in the shade.



Light coloured, loose-fitting clothes made from natural fibres like cotton will let sweat evaporate more easily, helping to keep you cool.



During daylight hours, **wear a hat and sunglasses**, and make sure you **apply SPF30+ sunscreen** at least 20 minutes before you go outdoors.



Drink plenty of water before and during exercise.



Keep cool by modifying your routine - go for a swim at a cooler time of the day or work out in an air-conditioned room or gym.

For more information about exercising safely when it is hot, visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyintheheat

CARING FOR BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN



Babies and young children are very sensitive to hot weather, so it is important to watch them closely and stop them from getting dehydrated or too hot.

If you think your child is unwell due to hot weather, seek medical attention.



Breastfed babies may require additional breastfeeds.

Bottle-fed babies can be given small amounts of cooled boiled water **between feeds.**



Choose the coolest place in your home for babies or young children to sleep, making sure air can circulate around their bassinet or cot.



Make sure young children have regular drinks throughout the day. Water is best. Avoid giving them sugary or fizzy drinks.



Avoid taking babies or young children out in the hottest part of the day.

If you do have to go out, keep them in the shade, protect their skin with loose-fitting clothing and a hat, and use baby or toddler formula sunscreen.



Dress babies and young children in light, loose-fitting clothing, like singlets and nappies, or loose tops.



To help babies and young children cool down, sponge them with lukewarm – not cold – water.



Never leave babies or children in a car.

CARING FOR OLDER PEOPLE



As we age, we can have a higher risk of heat-related illness, especially if we live alone, have medical conditions, or if we take certain medicines.

Some medicines can make you more prone to sunburn and heat stress, so it is important to watch for signs of being affected by hot weather. Always speak with your doctor or pharmacist for more advice about the medicines you are taking. If you are an older person or if you care for someone who is elderly, the following tips may help you:



Take simple steps to keep cool, air-conditioners and fans set to cool, using a cool, wet cloth to wipe your arms and neck, or putting your feet in a bowl of cool water.



Arrange for a friend or relative to visit you twice a day to check how you are and that you have everything you need to stay healthy in the heat.



Drink plenty of water throughout the day, even if you do not feel thirsty, and take a bottle of water wherever you go so you do not become dehydrated.



Register with the free Red Cross Telecross REDi service. Trained Red Cross volunteers call older people up to three times a day to make sure they are well and coping in hot weather.



Swap large meals for smaller ones.



Make cool meals, like salads, and avoid using ovens or stoves in hot weather – they can make your home much hotter.



A trip to an air-conditioned public space, like the local library, cinema or shopping centre, may help you keep cool and give you some relief from hot weather.

CARING FOR

PEOPLE WITH ONGOING PHYSICAL or MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



If you have a physical or mental health condition or if you take certain medicines, you may be more likely to have health problems when the weather is hot.



The medicines you take may change how your body responds to hot weather and could mean you do not realise that you are becoming overheated.



Check with your doctor about how much water you should drink when the weather is hot and always carry a bottle of water with you.



Ask your doctor about the medicines you take and exactly what your risks are during hot weather.



Have a friend or relative to check in with you every day to see how you are and make sure you have everything you need to stay healthy in the heat, especially if you live alone.

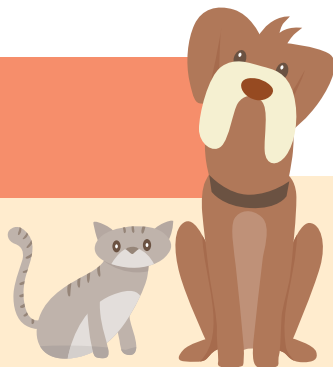


Continue taking your medicines as they have been prescribed by your doctor.



Maintain your regular daily routine.

CARING FOR FOR YOUR PETS



Like people, animals can be affected by hot weather and suffer heat-related illnesses.

To help your pet keep cool on hot days and during extreme heat:



If possible, bring your pets inside when the weather is hot. If they cannot be brought indoors, make sure they have plenty of shelter and shade.

Pets in cages, like birds, rabbits and guinea pigs, need to be kept indoors or in shade at all times of the day on extremely hot days.



Make sure pets have plenty of clean, fresh water to drink and that it is placed in the shade. Ice blocks will help keep their water cool for longer.



Never leave pets in a closed shed, garage or car – the temperature inside will get very hot very quickly.



Walk your dog early in the morning or later in the day when the temperature has dropped and it is cooler.



Never walk your dog on hot pavements, roads or sand – paws are sensitive and can easily burn.



Do not leave your pet's food outside in the heat – if they do not eat it straight away, cover it and put it in the fridge for later.

If your pet is showing signs of heat stress, like panting, sweating or drooling:

- > move them to a cool place
- > try to get them to drink water – you may have to pour some into their mouth
- > if your dog is overheated, stand it in water up to its belly
- > seek urgent medical attention for your pet from a veterinarian (a vet).



HOT WEATHER and FOOD SAFETY



Food safety is important at all times but it is especially important in hot weather and extreme heat. Bacteria grows much more quickly on food when conditions are hot, increasing the risk of food poisoning.



Make sure your fridge is clean, uncluttered and set at 5°C or less.



Put leftovers in the fridge as soon as they stop steaming.



Prepare food near to the time it is going to be served.



Do not reheat foods more than once.



Defrost foods in the fridge or the microwave, not on the kitchen bench.



Immediately pack chilled and frozen foods in the fridge and freezer when you get home.



Take insulated cooler bags to the shops to carry chilled and frozen foods.



Never leave food in a hot car.

For more information about food safety and how you can prevent food poisoning, visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/foodsafety

HOT WEATHER and SLEEP



It can be more difficult to get the sleep you need when the weather is very hot or in extreme heat.

Try these tips to help you get a better night sleep:



Keep curtains, blinds and windows closed during the day to keep your home cool.



Keep your bed cool by not letting your pets sleep with you.



Give your body time to cool down before bed by exercising or doing any strenuous activities earlier in the day rather than later.



Limit daytime naps to early afternoon and make sure they are short.



Eat cool meals later in the day, like salads, and avoid hot, heavy, salty or spicy foods.



Having a cool shower or bath just before going to bed will help bring your body temperature down, making it easier to get to sleep.



If you use a fan in the bedroom, keep the door open to improve airflow.



Sleep in the coolest room in your home – it might not be a bedroom.



Cotton clothing is best to sleep in because natural fibres breathe.

HOT WEATHER HAS PASSED

What to do when hot weather or extreme heat has passed.

Coping with hot weather can be very stressful and tiring. It can take a couple of days for you to completely recover.

To help you stay healthy after hot weather or extreme heat:



Continue to drink plenty of water so your body can get back in balance.



Contact family and friends to see how they coped and to check if they need any help.



Open doors and windows with locking security screens to let cool air through your home to cool it down.



Think about the things that you could do differently so you are better able to cope next time it is very hot.



Get plenty of rest and, if you feel unwell, make a time to see your doctor.



Make any necessary changes to your home so it will be more comfortable next time there is hot weather or extreme heat.

MORE INFORMATION

Where to go for more information and further details.

For more information about staying healthy in the heat, visit the SA Health website at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyintheheat, where you will find additional information like fact sheets, infographics and contact details.

You can also find more information about food safety on the SA Health website at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/foodsafety.



Emergency telephone numbers

In a medical emergency, always call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

For emergency assistance due to fallen trees, blackouts and structural damage to buildings cause by severe winds and storms, contact the SES on 132 500.

Helpful telephone numbers

healthdirect Australia	1800 022 222
Parent Helpline	1300 364 100
Pregnancy, Birth and Baby helpline	1800 882 436
Red Cross Telecross REDi Service	1800 188 071



Broadcast media - ABC Emergency

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (the ABC) delivers official warnings and alerts, and publishes coverage about emergencies, including extreme heat.

ABC Radio

ABC Radio broadcasts throughout metropolitan and regional South Australia.

To find the ABC Radio frequency in your area or an area you will be visiting during extreme heat,

visit www.abc.net.au/radio/frequency-finder

ABC Emergency website www.abc.net.au/news/emergency

ABC Emergency social media

Facebook: facebook.com/ABCemergency

Twitter: twitter.com/ABCemergency



Helpful websites

FOR HEALTH INFORMATION:

SA Health – Healthy In The Heat

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyintheheat

The National Health Services Directory www.nhsd.com.au

WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH NETWORK

Parenting and Child Health website www.cyh.com

FOR EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Alert SA www.alert.sa.gov.au

The State Emergency Service www.ses.sa.gov.au

FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) COMMUNITIES

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

www.dcsi.sa.gov.au

Multicultural SA

www.multicultural.sa.gov.au



FOR WEATHER INFORMATION

The Bureau of Meteorology (SA)

www.bom.gov.au/sa

(site optimised for mobile devices)

<http://m.bom.gov.au/sa/adelaide>



Helpful social media accounts

SA Health

Facebook:

facebook.com/sahealth

Twitter:

twitter.com/sahealth



Alert SA

facebook.com/alert.sa.gov.au

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

twitter.com/SA_DCSI

The Bureau of Meteorology (SA)

twitter.com/BOM_SA

SA Power Networks

Twitter:

twitter.com/SAPowerNetworks

Facebook:

facebook.com/SAPowerNetworks

ABC Emergency

Facebook:

facebook.com/ABCemergency

Twitter:

twitter.com/ABCemergency

ABC Adelaide

twitter.com/abcnewsAdelaide

ABC South East

twitter.com/abcsoutheastSA

ABC 639 North and West

twitter.com/abcnorthandwest

ABC Eyre Peninsula

twitter.com/1485ABCEP



Helpful apps for mobile devices

The following apps are available via the iTunes app store or Google Play for Android:

- Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)
- National Health Services Directory (NHSD)
- SunSmart



Important Phone Numbers

For more information

**Emergency Management Unit
Public Health and Clinical Systems
Department for Health and Ageing**

11 Hindmarsh Square

Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 7425 7065

E-mail: healthemergencymanagement@sa.gov.au

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyintheheat



www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons

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