

Fact Sheet

Extreme heat guidance for Local Health Networks

Guidance for Local Health Networks and hospitals to ensure a planned, managed, and effective response to an extreme heat or heatwave event.

- > Understand the mechanisms of heat illnesses, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, and treatment.
- > Recognise the early signs of heat-related illness, including heatstroke which is a medical emergency.
- > Be aware of the risk factors in heat-related illness.
- > Consider holding a team/staff meeting prior to summer to increase staff awareness and to conduct any training related to heat and the health of both staff and patients.
- > Educate those at risk, and their carers, about how to look after themselves during hot weather, particularly in regional areas.
- > Consider developing a list of at-risk clients and how you will ensure that this list is accessible to relevant staff, particularly in regional areas.
- > Consider rescheduling activities to earlier times of the day when it is cooler, postponing appointments to another day, or cancelling activities completely (e.g. exercise classes) to prevent clients and staff from travelling in the heat. You can also consider switching face-to-face appointments to a phone call where appropriate to limit travel for both staff and clients.
- > Ensure the LHN/Hospital is heat-friendly for patients and staff, with a cool waiting room, drinking water, blinds closed to block the sun, and regular staff breaks for hydration.
- > Develop and implement a communication policy to keep staff updated if extreme heat or a heatwave is forecast.
- > Consider sharing information about heat health with your clients through written information, videos, social media, and information sessions, this includes:
 - sharing SA Health extreme heat factsheets, translated resources and the Healthy in the Heat booklet available at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyintheheat
 - ordering printed copies of the Healthy in the Heat booklet by emailing: Health.DisasterManagementBranch@sa.gov.au
 - monitoring heatwave warnings and advice as well as sharing the [Easy English Heatwave](#) factsheet available at www.ses.sa.gov.au
 - registering with the free Telecross REDi service to ensure vulnerable people are well and coping during declared heatwaves by calling 1800 188 071.

Self-assessment checklist

Considerations for your extreme heat and heatwave plan	Y/N
Does your LHN or hospital have an extreme heat plan, that includes responsibilities and risks?	
Are relevant staff aware of your plan, how to access it and what it contains?	
Are there processes in place for communicating the plan to all staff, residents, and families?	
Has your plan been reviewed since the last summer season? Date of last review:	
Is it integrated with your LHN or hospital's emergency and disaster response plan?	

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Is there an emergency department/urgent care centre sub-plan?	
Is there a clear escalation protocol to notify executive team members of extreme heat/heatwaves, disruptions to service delivery and criteria to request activation of an IMT response?	
Does your heat plan specify how you will monitor the forecast for extreme heat or heatwave conditions? (i.e. SASES heatwave warnings, or Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warnings).	
Does your extreme heat plan specify actions for a forecast single day of extreme heat?	
Does your extreme heat plan specify actions for a forecast multi-day heatwave?	
Considerations for patient care in your extreme heat plan	Y/N
Does it address increasing inpatient bed capacity during extreme heat and heatwave conditions?	
Does it address processes for proactively assessing people's health care needs in preparation for and during extreme heat or people's needs living in the community, with community delivered services in the home?	
Does your discharge planning considerations for at-risk patients include weather conditions such as extreme heat and heatwave? (e.g. consider providing taxi vouchers, or discharging patients during cooler times of the day).	
Does it address switching outpatient appointments to telehealth where possible?	
Does it consider advising on medication review for at-risk patients?	
Considerations for staff in your extreme heat plan	Y/N
Does your plan ensure staff are trained, skilled and available to manage extreme heat events if they occur, including knowledge of plans and pre-summer exercising of plans?	
Does it cover advice for all staff to keep themselves safe (e.g. hydration, regular breaks, travel to and from work?)	
Are staff trained to recognise at-risk patients and the management of heat-related illness?	
Does it have arrangements to consider increased staffing during forecast extreme heat or heatwaves, and on the days that follow?	
Considerations for power outages in your extreme heat plan	Y/N
Do you have a plan for an alternate power supply in the event of a power outage?	
Do you have a plan for failure of air-conditioning?	
Do you have a plan for appropriate and safe storage of medications, food, and drinks during heatwaves, or in the event of power outages during periods of extreme heat?	
Additional considerations for emergency department/urgent care centre subplans	Y/N
Does the subplan consider increasing capacity to treat emergency patients (e.g. by using other areas such as outpatient clinics)?	

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Does it consider access to hydration and cooling (e.g. water station, fans, air-conditioning) for patients and visitors, including in the waiting room and in ambulance ramping areas?	
Does it cover the health and safety of community partners (e.g. SA Ambulance Service and SA Police)?	
Have you got sufficient quantities and storage for equipment, supplies, medication during periods of extreme heat?	

For more information

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