

Heatwave: Stay safe and healthy

A heatwave is a period of unusually hot weather in an area that lasts 3 days or more. Heat puts stress on our bodies and hot nights make it harder to recover. Heatwaves kill more Australians compared to any other natural disaster.

If you care for, support, or assist people at greater risk of being impacted by heatwaves, it is important to know what to do and when to visit a health care provider if necessary.

Your checklist to support those you care for during a heatwave:

Stay informed and share information

- Stay up to date on heatwave alerts ([emergency.wa.gov.au](https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)), listen to the radio and television weather reports.
- Share heatwave alerts and forecast information with people you care for and check they understand the information.

Make a plan if their health at higher risk

- Ensure the person you care for has a care plan for heatwaves, especially if they have acute or chronic medical conditions. If they do not have a care plan, or if they become unwell, help them arrange an appointment with their healthcare provider.
- Encourage them to continue to taking medication and follow their fluid intake requirements as advised by their healthcare practitioner unless instructed otherwise.
- If their medication has been affected by heat (such as loss of power for a refrigerated item), advise them to seek advice from their healthcare practitioner and/or pharmacist.

Make a plan to help them stay in contact

- Check they know who and when to call for help.
- Check they have contact details for their healthcare practitioner, care workers, neighbours, friends and relatives that can also provide support. Make sure you have a copy of these details too.

Encourage them to stay cool inside

- Encourage the person to:
 - stay in the coolest parts of their home.
 - reduce physical activity and to do their tasks during a cooler time of the day.
 - open windows and doors during cooler times of the day to ventilate and cool their home, if it is safe to do so
- If it is too hot in their home, encourage them to visit a local cool space such as a library, community centre or shopping centre. Help them organise extra care if they require it.

Prepare their home

- Check they have enough food and water for the heatwave period and a few days after.
- Prepare a cool room in their home for them to use. This room should be shaded and have air conditioning or a fan.
- Provide them with a spray bottle with cool water or wet cloths to help cool them down.
- Check that their fridge and freezer are working properly.
- Encourage them to sleep with just a sheet in the coolest part of their home. Remove winter bedding and replace it with lightweight, cotton bedding.
- Help them arrange a small emergency kit in case of a power outage. This should include a torch with extra batteries and a first aid kit.

Share ways to stay safe outside

- Encourage the person to:
 - limit time spent outdoors - if they need to go outside, try to do so in the early morning or late evening.
 - wear lightweight, light-coloured and loose-fitting clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
 - wear a wide brim hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and to stay in the shade.
 - carry a water bottle with them.

Ensure they drink plenty of fluids

- Check they are drinking plenty of fluids regularly throughout the day – this includes water, diluted juice (mixed with water), and low sugar electrolyte or sports drinks.
- Avoid drinks containing caffeine such as coffee, tea, and caffeinated energy drinks.

Know the signs of heat-related illness and act fast



Dehydration

Feeling thirsty, a dry mouth, and darker urine.



Treatment

Rest in a cool area, remove excess clothing and drink water.



Heat stress

Pale skin, excess sweating or no sweating, and dark urine.



Treatment

Lie in cool area and remove excess clothing. Apply wet cloths, cold water or wrapped icepacks to the skin (armpits and groin) and drink water. Call triple zero (000) if symptoms do not improve in 30 minutes.



Heat stroke

Confusion, incoherent speech, abnormal walking, seizures or coma.



Heat stroke is a life-threatening medical emergency. Immediately call triple zero (000).

If you or someone you know is ill, contact your regular health care provider or call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222. In an emergency go to your nearest hospital or call triple zero (000).

For more information, visit [healthywa.wa.gov.au](https://www.healthyswa.wa.gov.au)

