

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.

People experiencing homelessness are more likely to be exposed to heat during heatwaves, and they often have decreased ability to adapt. Many people experiencing homelessness have additional vulnerabilities including existing medical conditions and reduced awareness to the occurrence and risk of heatwaves.

Your checklist to support people experiencing homelessness 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 experiencing homelessness to help them prepare and plan.

Is their health at higher risk?

- Encourage people experiencing homelessness to monitor their health, especially if they have acute or chronic medical conditions. Encourage them to speak with their healthcare practitioner if they feel unwell.
- 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 is at risk of being affected by heat, advise them to seek advice from their healthcare practitioner and/or pharmacist.

Share contacts for help

- Provide people experiencing homelessness with emergency contacts and check if they know when to call for help.
- Encourage them to stay in contact with their regular support networks and services during heatwaves.

Encourage drinking plenty of fluids

- Encourage people experiencing homelessness to:
 - drink plenty of fluids such as 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.

Share ways to keep cool

- Encourage people experiencing homelessness to:
 - know places where they can get cool drinking water.
 - stay in the shade or indoors as much as possible. Local indoor cool spaces include libraries, community centres, and shopping centres.
 - wear lightweight, light-coloured, and loose-fitting clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
 - wear a wide brim hat and sunglasses and apply sunscreen.
 - cool down by wetting their skin with cool water.

Promote safe sleeping conditions

- Remind people experiencing homelessness that it is important to aim to sleep in cool areas with just a sheet covering them.



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 [healthyswa.wa.gov.au](https://www.healthyswa.wa.gov.au)

