

Heatwave: Know your health, know your risk

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.

Your checklist to stay safe and healthy during a heatwave

Stay informed

- 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.

Is your health at higher risk?

- Monitor your health, especially if you have acute or chronic medical conditions. Speak to your healthcare practitioner if you feel unwell.
- Continue to take your medication and follow your fluid intake requirements as advised by your healthcare practitioner unless instructed otherwise.
- If your medication has been affected by heat (such as loss of power for a refrigerated item), seek advice from your healthcare practitioner and/or pharmacist.

Stay in contact

- Know who and when to call for help.
- Check on neighbours, friends, relatives and those who live alone.
- Share ways to stay safe during heatwaves with others.

Drink plenty of fluids

- Drink plenty of fluids regularly throughout the day – 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.

Stay safe outside

- Limit time outdoors. If you 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 and sunglasses, apply sunscreen, and try to stay in the shade. Carry a water bottle with you.

Keep safe and cool inside

- Keep windows, blinds and curtains shut during the hottest parts of the day and close doors to rooms you don't need to access to help block out the heat.
- Use your air-conditioning or a fan if you have one.
- Cool down by wetting your skin with cold water using a spray bottle or wet cloth.
- Limit using stoves and ovens as these can heat up your home.
- Open windows and doors during cooler parts of the day to ventilate and cool your home if it is safe to do so.
- Sleep with just a sheet over you in the coolest part of your home. Remove winter bedding and replace it with lightweight cotton bedding.
- Keep pets inside or in a cool, shaded place with enough water. Do not sleep with pets as this may make you hot.
- Know where to go if your home gets too hot. Check if your council has a list of cool spaces or know local cool spaces you can go to such as libraries, community centres, and shopping centres.

Stay safe during power outages

- Keep windows, blinds and curtains shut during the hottest parts of the day and close doors to rooms you don't need to access to help block out the heat.
- Open windows and doors during cooler parts of the day to ventilate and cool your home if it is safe to do so.
- Limit the number of times you open the fridge and freezer.
- If a power outage continues long-term, consider moving to friends, relatives or community facilities where these services are unaffected.



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)

