

# 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.

Babies and young children are very sensitive to high temperatures and can get heat stress quickly. It is very important to watch babies and young children closely to keep them from overheating and getting dehydrated during a heatwave.

## Your checklist to keep children 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?

- Talk to your healthcare practitioner about your child's health needs during heatwaves and make a plan to keep them safe and healthy, especially if they have acute or chronic health conditions.
- Ensure your child continues to take medication and follow 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), seek advice from their healthcare practitioner and/or pharmacist.

### Stay in contact

- Know who and when to call for help.

### Ensure children drink plenty of fluids

- During heatwaves, breast fed babies (including expressed breast milk fed) may need extra breast milk feeds.
- Bottle (formula) fed babies may need small amounts of clean water in between feeds. This also applies to older babies, especially if the baby is having other foods.
- Ensure young children have regular drinks throughout the day. Water is best. Avoid giving them sugary or fizzy drinks.

### Stay safe travelling in a car

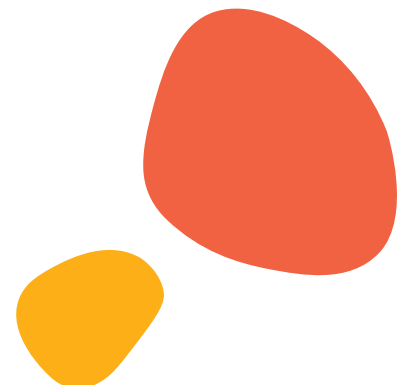
- Never leave babies or children in a car.
- Ensure the sun is not shining directly on your baby or child.
- Consider using a window shield or wet, lightweight cloth to protect your baby from the sun.

### Keep children cool inside

- Keep windows, blinds and curtains shut during the hottest parts of the day. Close doors of rooms you don't need to access to block out the heat.
- Use your air-conditioning or a fan if you have one. Make sure the room does not get too cold (about 24 °C to 26 °C is low enough).
- Dress babies and young children in light, loose-fitting clothing.
- Choose the coolest place in your home for babies or young children to sleep, making sure air can circulate around their bassinette or cot.
- 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 with children outside

- Limit time outdoors. If you need to go outside, try to do so in the early morning or late evening.
- If you go out, stay in the shade, protect your child's skin with loose-fitting clothing, a hat and use baby or toddler formula sunscreen. Carry a water bottle with you.
- Avoid using baby carriers and slings in the heat as they restrict airflow and babies may be more likely to overheat.
- If you use a pram, shade your baby with a wet, lightweight cloth. Don't leave babies sleeping in a pram.



# Know the signs of heat-related illness and act fast



Babies and young children may not show the early signs and symptoms of a heat-related illness that occur in adults, they may just look unwell or be more irritable than usual.



## Babies and young children may:

- Be excessively fussy, cry a lot, or seem lethargic
- Have increased sleepiness or difficulty waking up
- Show a lack of interest in playing or eating
- Seem floppy
- Refuse to drink
- Have hot, red, and dry skin, or unusually pale skin
- Cry without tears
- Have dark yellow urine, or fewer wet nappies than usual
- Have a lower (sunken) soft spot (fontanelle) on the top of their head



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



If your child is having difficulty breathing, seems confused, or is unresponsive, 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 [healthysa.gov.au](https://www.healthysa.gov.au)

