

Regional Heatwave Resilience Project

Building community preparedness



NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

TARGET AUDIENCE – THE ELDERLY & PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Stage 1 Messages: General Community Awareness

These messages seek to raise general community awareness of heatwave / extreme heat impacts and preparedness and would be issued periodically during the lead up to and during summer.

Beat the Heat this Summer!

Many of us simply don't realise that extreme heat is a major cause of health problems every year in Australia, with heatwaves causing more hospitalisations and deaths than any other natural disaster.

In addition to heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, heatwaves can seriously worsen existing health conditions including cardiac disease, mental health and behavioural disorders, asthma and obstructive lung conditions.

This summer, it is time we all started to take heat related illness seriously.

The elderly and people with a disability are among those most at risk from heatwaves, making it very important for them to know the four easy steps to prevent heat related illness:

- **Drink plenty of water** and avoid alcoholic, hot or sugary drinks
- **Keep Cool** – do less and avoid being outside during the hottest part of the day
- **Check on** elderly friends, neighbours and relatives, especially if they live alone
- **Have a Plan** for how to stay cool when it heats up

It is also important to get ready before the heat arrives. For example prepare your home, or part of your home as cool retreat. When the heat does arrive make your home more comfortable by closing windows, blinds and curtains to keep the heat out during the hottest part of the day. If you have an air conditioner, reduce running costs by setting it to 24 degrees, and turning on before the room heats up so it doesn't have to work as hard.



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If it gets too hot at home have a plan of where else you might go to stay cool and how to get there safely. Public libraries, community centres and galleries are great low-cost places to beat the heat during the hottest part of the day, as are shopping centres, cinemas and restaurants.

[Freely accessed public facilities registered as 'Cool Spots' in the (INSERT COUNCIL AREA NAME) include (INSERT FACILITY NAMES) and will be open as normal (INSERT OPERATING HOURS)]

Seniors and people with a disability should also think about their medications. Heat can have a direct impact on medications, making them less effective or occasionally more toxic when exposed to and stored in high temperatures. Some medications can increase the risk of heat related illness.

Most medications need to be stored below 25°C or in the fridge if indicated. This applies particularly to antibiotics, adrenergic drugs, insulin, analgesics and sedatives.

Check your medicines for details, and keep this in mind if you transfer medications to a pill box or Webster Pack. Storing these on the window sill or top of the fridge is not ideal during hot conditions.

Talk to your doctor about the correct use and storage of your medications and any affects they may have on you during hot weather.

Know the early signs of heat related illness too:

- tiredness
- thirst
- bright or dark yellow urine and
- dizziness or fainting.

If you or others have any of these symptoms take steps to prevent it reaching dangerous levels. Move somewhere cool, drink water or diluted fruit juice (1 part juice in 4 parts water) and avoid tea, coffee or alcohol. If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice.

To find out more about ways to beat the heat and be prepared during a heatwave visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat



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