

# Regional Heatwave Resilience Project

Building community preparedness



## WEBSITE CONTENT

### TARGET AUDIENCE - ALL OF COMMUNITY

#### 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!

Heatwaves, or long periods of extreme heat, can have serious impacts on your health.

Heatwaves are a major cause of health problems every summer in Australia.

Heat related illness includes dehydration, heat stroke and heat cramps, while extreme heat can also seriously worsen existing health conditions including cardiac disease, mental health and behavioural disorders, asthma and obstructive lung conditions.

Four easy actions everyone can take to protect their health during heatwave / extreme heat events include:

**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

Find out more about what you can do beat the heat this summer:

- Families [\[LINK TO CONTENT BELOW\]](#)
- The Elderly and people with a Disability [\[LINK TO CONTENT BELOW\]](#)
- Rural and Isolated Communities [\[LINK TO CONTENT BELOW\]](#)
- Medication impacts [\[LINK TO CONTENT BELOW\]](#)



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## Families with Young Children

Babies and young children are more susceptible to the heat than the general community because they cannot adjust to changes in temperature as well as adults. They also sweat less, which reduces their ability to cool down, and they generate more heat during exercise than adults.

This increases their risk of overheating and developing a heat-related illness. The heat can also worsen existing conditions.

To beat the heat parents and carers of children under five years of age should:

- Make sure babies, children and breastfeeding mums are getting plenty of fluids.
- Breast or bottle feed babies more often (babies are getting enough fluids if they have 6-8 pale wet nappies in a 24-hour period)
- Offer older children drinks, preferably water, more often.
- Dress the family in cool, loose clothing
- Never leave people or pets in the car
- Plan active or outdoor activities for the coolest times of day
- If going into the sun wear a hat and sunscreen, even if only for short periods.

Know the signs of heat related illness in babies and children, such as

- looking unwell and more irritable than usual
- pale and clammy skin
- sleepy and floppy
- fewer wet nappies than usual
- dark urine (normal is light straw colour)
- refusing to drink
- intense thirst
- dry skin, mouth and eyes (no tears when crying) or
- the soft spot on a baby's head (fontanelle) may be lower than usual.

If you think your baby or young child is suffering from heat exhaustion, seek medical advice.

Move the child to a cool area and remove all extra clothes, if conscious and able to drink give them small sips of cool fluid and bring their temperature down using any method available (sponging with cool water, cool bath or covering with cool damp cloths).

For more information go to the NSW Health Beat the Heat website - <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat>



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## The Elderly and People with a Disability

The elderly and people with a disability are particularly susceptible to extreme heat. It is recommended people from these groups stay in regular contact with family, friends, carers or neighbours as temperatures rise so that they know you are okay or can provide help if needed. Make sure they also know your plan to manage during the heat.

Other important ways to Beat the Heat:

1. Prepare your home, or part of your home as cool retreat
  - To make your home more comfortable during the heat of the day, keep blinds and curtains closed to keep the heat out. If it is safe to do so, open them again in the evening or when the temperature drops to help cool down the house
  - Set air conditioners to 24 degrees to reduce running costs, and turn on before the room heats up so it doesn't have to work as hard.
2. Think about your medications
  - Some medications can increase the risk of heat related illness
  - Some medications can be less effective or occasionally more toxic when exposed to and stored in high temperatures
  - 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.
  - Talk to your doctor about the correct use and storage of your medications and any affects they may have on you during hot weather.
3. Know the early signs of heat related illness:
  - dizziness, fainting
  - tiredness
  - thirst
  - bright or dark yellow urine.

Take steps to prevent it reaching dangerous levels. Move somewhere cool, drink water or diluted fruit juice (1 part juice in 4 parts water). Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol. If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice.

For more information go to the NSW Health Beat the Heat website - <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat>



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## Rural and Isolated communities

Those living in rural or isolated communities can be especially at risk during heatwaves due to their isolation from services and the often physical, outdoor nature of their work. It is therefore important to stay in regular contact with family and friends as temperatures rise.

If you live in a rural or isolated area it is important to prepare early for a heatwave:

- Plan your work and chores for cooler days and the coolest times of the day
- Plan to keep livestock cool, fed and in the shade
- Have a back up plan in case you lose power or water during a heatwave
- Stock up on food and water for both people and livestock so you don't need to head out during the heat of the day
- Check your medications (and also those for animals and livestock) are stored in a cool, dark place (generally below 25°C is recommended)
- Speak to your doctor about any affects medications may have on you during hot weather.

Know the early signs of heat related illness:

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

Take steps to prevent it reaching dangerous levels. Move somewhere cool, drink water or diluted fruit juice (1 part juice in 4 parts water). Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol. If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice.

For more information go to the NSW Health Beat the Heat website - <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat>



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## Medication impacts

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 also 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 – so check your medications for details.

If you transfer your medicines to a pill box or Webster pack make sure these are stored in a suitable location. Keeping on the window sill or top of the fridge during a heatwave is probably not the best location.

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:

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

Take steps to prevent it reaching dangerous levels. Move somewhere cool, drink water or diluted fruit juice (1 part juice in 4 parts water). Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol. If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice.

For more information about medications go to the NSW Health Beat the Heat website - <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/information-for-health-professionals.aspx#medication>



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