

Regional Heatwave Resilience Project

Building community preparedness



WEBSITE CONTENT

TARGET AUDIENCE – FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

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 extreme heat 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

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.



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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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