

# Regional Heatwave Resilience Project

Building community preparedness



## NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

### TARGET ISSUE – MEDICATION IMPACTS

#### **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.*

#### **Extreme Heat Impacts on Your Medications**

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.

In particular many people may not realise that the heat can have direct impacts on their medications. Medications can be less effective or occasionally more toxic when exposed to and stored in high temperatures.

Some medications can increase the risk of heat related illness. People taking regular medications, and those with existing medical conditions, should talk to their doctor about any possible affects they may cause during hot weather.

Medications should also be stored correctly. Check your medicines for details, but most need to be stored below 25°C or in the fridge if indicated. This applies particularly to antibiotics, adrenergic drugs, insulin, analgesics and sedatives.

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 during a heatwave may not be ideal.



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It is also important to know the early signs of heat related illness:

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

If you or others experience 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). 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](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat)



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