

In Tasmania we are used to coping with cool weather, but are less experienced coping with extreme heat.

Some people may experience the effects of hot weather more than others, so it's important to know what these effects are, who is at risk and what you can do.

Who is at risk during extreme heat?

Everyone is potentially at risk during extremely hot weather, but some people have a higher risk of becoming ill than others.

Those at higher risk are:

- older people, particularly the frail or over 65
- pregnant women, babies and young children
- those who live on their own or who don't live close to other people
- people who work outdoors, or who are physically active
- people with a physical disability, or those with a serious chronic condition (heart problems, breathing problems, diabetes, serious mental illness, dementia, Alzheimer's disease or those who are very overweight)
- people taking certain types of medications, including those affecting sweating and body temperature
- a person with a high temperature from an existing infection.

It is very important that those at higher risk take extra care of themselves during hot weather.

It is also important that family, friends and neighbours of those at higher risk keep in contact with these people regularly to make sure they are coping with the extreme heat.

For more information

A guide to coping in extreme heat is available for download from www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat. This guide will give you more information on preparing for and coping with extreme heat.

The following fact sheets provide specific information on coping during extreme heat, and are available from www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat.

- Preventing heat-related illness
- Physical activity during the heat
- Caring for babies and young children
- Older children and teenagers
- Caring for older people
- Advice for older people
- Pregnancy tips during the heat
- People with physical and mental health conditions
- Type of clothing to wear
- Safe food handling
- Caring for pets and wildlife
- Sleeping when it's hot

Public Health Hotline: 1800 671 738



Public and Environmental Health
Department of Health and Human Services
www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

Published November 2014
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Are you prepared for the heat?



Department of Health
and Human Services



What you can do

Being prepared for extreme heat is important. At the onset of hot weather, there are some simple things you can do to reduce your risk of being affected by the heat.



Stay hydrated

Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks, alcohol and caffeine.



Check on others

Check regularly on relatives and friends at risk, such as the elderly and people with chronic medical conditions. Look for signs of heat-related illness.



Clothing

Wear lightweight, comfortable clothing, especially light colours that reflect the heat.



Minimise sun

Keep out of the sun as much as possible. If you must go outside, wear long-sleeved clothing, sunglasses, a wide-brimmed hat and plenty of broad-spectrum sunscreen (minimum SPF30+).



Prepare your house

If you have a fan or air-conditioner, make sure it is working (and set to cool). If you do not have a fan or air-conditioner, open doors and windows where safe to do so. Draw blinds and curtains to keep out the heat during the day.



Pets

Make sure your pets are kept out of the sun and have plenty of cool water to drink. Avoid exercising your dog in the heat of the day.



Seek medical advice

Remember, heat-related illness can be life threatening. In an emergency, call 000 for help. For non-urgent medical assistance, call *healthdirect Australia* on 1800 022 222 or call your GP.

Signs of heat-related illness

Dehydration and heat cramps

Symptoms

- Thirst
- Fainting or dizziness
- Loss of appetite
- Irritability
- Tiredness
- Sweating, with moist, cool skin
- Muscle spasms or twitching
- Muscle cramps

What you should do

- Cease activity immediately
- Drink plenty of water
- Use a spray bottle of water or a wet towel on your face and body to stay cool
- Have a cool shower or bath
- Stretch and massage limbs gently to ease muscle spasms, or massage firmly if cramped
- **If still feeling unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible**

Heat exhaustion

Symptoms

- Headaches
- Heavy sweating, with cold, clammy skin
- Muscle weakness or cramps
- Fatigue, weakness and restlessness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Weak, rapid pulse
- Poor coordination
- Fast, shallow breathing

For emergency medical assistance, call 000.

What you should do

- **Consider seeking medical help immediately, especially for a younger or older person. Go to the nearest hospital, or if this is not possible, call 000 for an ambulance**
- Go through the same steps for 'Dehydration and heat cramps'
- In addition, put damp clothes or cool packs under the armpits, in the groin, on the back of the neck and on the forehead to reduce body heat
- **If still feeling unwell, especially if vomiting continues in a younger or older person, seek medical help immediately**

Heatstroke

Symptoms

- Confusion, headaches, dizziness and nausea
- Skin flushed, hot and unusually dry (sweating has stopped)
- Intense thirst and dry, swollen tongue
- Rapid pulse
- Rapid shallow breathing
- Slurred speech
- Aggressive or strange behavior
- Sleepiness
- Convulsions
- Seizures or coma

Heatstroke is a medical emergency which can result in permanent damage to vital organs, or even death, if not treated immediately.

What you should do

- **Call 000 immediately for an ambulance and stay with the person**
- Cease activity immediately
- Keep still
- Drink plenty of fluids in small sips, if conscious (avoid caffeine and alcohol)
- Bring temperature down by any method possible – for example, sponging with cool water, soaking clothes with cool water
- Put damp cloths or cool packs under the armpits, in the groin, on the back of the neck and on the forehead to reduce body heat
- Do not give aspirin or paracetamol