

BEAT THE HEAT

Health tips for a safe season

Last updated: January 2015

Babies and children in hot weather

The information on this factsheet will help you look after your baby or child in hot weather.

Babies and children need to be watched carefully because they are at a higher risk of becoming unwell than adults.

Things to remember

- Babies and children overheat and dehydrate quickly in hot weather
- Breastfeed or bottle-feed your baby more often in hot weather
- Offer older babies and children extra drinks in hot weather, the best drink is water
- Dress babies and children in cool clothing and protect them from the sun with hats and sunscreen
- Never leave children in the car, not even for a moment

How does hot weather affect my baby or child?

Hot weather can affect your baby or child because their bodies cannot adjust to changes in temperature as well as adults. Babies and children sweat less, reducing their bodies' ability to cool down. They are at risk of overheating and developing a heat-related illness.

Keeping your baby and child healthy in hot weather

1. Drinking enough fluids

- Babies and young children are not able to tell you that they are thirsty, and older children are often too busy playing, so it is important to offer drinks or breastfeeds frequently.
- Breastfed and bottle-fed babies less than six months of age will need to be fed more often in hot weather.
- Babies over six months of age can be offered small amounts of cooled boiled water, after or between milk feeds.
- A good indicator that a baby is getting enough fluids is if it has six to eight pale wet nappies in a 24 hour period.
- If you are breastfeeding your baby, make sure you drink plenty of water.
- Offer young children water as their main drink throughout the day. Fruit juice, fruit based drinks and fizzy drinks are not recommended.

2. Keeping cool

- Dress babies and children in light, loose clothing, and a broad-brimmed hat for outside.
- For sleeping, choose the coolest room in the house. Keep the heat out by closing curtains and make sure fresh air can circulate around the bassinette or cot.

- Cool your baby with damp cloths and place wet towels or sheets around the bassinette or cot. Check regularly to make sure they are not getting too cold.
- Give your baby or child a lukewarm bath or sponge them down with lukewarm water. Don't use cold water or ice in the bath.
- If you use a fan, don't point it towards your baby or child.
- If you have an air conditioner, setting it at 24-26 degrees Celsius is low enough.

3. Out and about

- If possible, stay inside, particularly during the hottest parts of the day, generally between 11am and 5pm. Plan your activities for early morning, late afternoon or evenings.
- If you have to go out, protect your baby's or child's skin from the sun (keep them in the shade or cover their skin with loose clothing and a broad-brimmed hat). Use small amounts of sunscreen with SPF 30+ on skin which cannot be covered.
- Never leave babies, children or pets alone in a car, not even for a moment. Babies and children can overheat very quickly in cars. The temperature inside a parked car can be 30-40°C hotter than outside the car. Most of the temperature increase occurs within five minutes of closing the car and having the windows down 5 cm causes only a very slight decrease in temperature.
- Never cover a baby capsule in the car with a rug or towel as this will restrict air moving around the baby, making them hotter. Use sun shades on windows.
- Only cover your baby's pram or stroller with a light cloth that still allows the air to circulate. An enclosed pram can get very hot; try to ensure that the air circulates around your baby by removing the back panel (if possible) or placing them in more open strollers.

Signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and what to do for your baby or child

Signs and symptoms	What to do – first aid
<p>Heat exhaustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (babies may feel uncomfortable to have skin contact when breastfeeding – try a towel on skin) • Intense thirst (but as the baby gets weaker, he/she may drink less) • Dry skin, mouth and eyes (no tears when crying) • Soft spot on baby's head (fontanelle) may be lower than usual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you think your baby or young child is suffering from heat exhaustion, seek medical advice • Move baby or child to a cool area and remove all extra clothes • Try to give your baby or child drinks (unless unconscious and not able to swallow) • A breastfed baby with heat exhaustion should be offered the breast as much as possible. Cool boiled water may be considered, particularly for babies over six months old or those already receiving other fluids • A bottle fed baby with heat exhaustion should be offered an extra bottle and cool boiled water • An older child with heat exhaustion should be offered water or diluted fruit juice (1 part juice in 4 parts water) • Cover your child or baby with cool damp cloths or sponge he/she down with water
<p>Heat stroke</p> <p>All the signs of heat exhaustion as above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising body temperature • Red, hot and dry skin • Rapid breathing • Vomiting • Confusion • Coma (not responding when touched or called) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately call 000 and ask for an ambulance • Move baby or child to a cool area and remove all extra clothes • If the baby or child is conscious and able to drink, give small sips of cool fluids • Bring their temperature down using any method available (sponging with cool water, cool bath, or covering with cool damp cloths) • If unconscious, lay the child on their side (recovery position) and check they can breathe properly. For babies less than a year old, a different recovery position is needed. Cradle the infant in your arms with their head tilted downwards to make sure they do not choke on their tongue or vomit. Support their head with your hand • Perform CPR if needed



Further information

Visit our webpage www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat for:

- More detailed tips for looking after babies and children in hot weather
- General information on health and hot weather

For general medical enquiries call Health Direct on 1800 022 222