

Beat the Heat

Hot weather
can be extra
dangerous
for seniors

Why are people over 65 at increased risk of heat-related illnesses?

In Australia, extreme heat events are responsible for more deaths than all other natural hazard events combined.

We've all lived through hot summers, but as we age our body isn't able to cool itself as well as it used to.

Physical changes, and some medications, can lead to a higher risk of dehydration and reduce the body's ability to cool itself.

Heat can also worsen some medical conditions including heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, neurological disease and mental illness.

It's important to talk to your doctor about how heat might affect your health and any medications you are taking.





What is heat-related illness?

Heat-related illness occurs when your body temperature increases to a dangerous level. Severe heat-related illness includes heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Signs of heat exhaustion include pale skin, headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, weakness, irritability, thirst, heavy sweating, muscle cramps and decreased urine output.

People with these symptoms should take steps to cool down right away, move out of the sun and seek shade or air conditioning, take a cool shower or bath if possible and drink water.

People who don't respond to these steps or show symptoms of heat stroke should call **Triple Zero (000)**. Symptoms of heat stroke include a very high body temperature, confusion, slurred speech, agitation and altered mental state, loss of consciousness, profuse sweating or hot, dry skin, muscle twitching or seizures, rapid breathing and a quick and strong pulse.



Tips to prepare yourself before hot weather

- Check that air-conditioners, fans, refrigerators, and freezers are working properly.
- Speak to your doctor if you are unsure about how your health condition or medication might affect your ability to cope during hot weather.
- Make sure you have enough food and medicine for everyone in your home so you don't have to go out in the heat.
- Know where in your local area you can go to get out of the heat. Places that may be cooler than your home include:
 - air-conditioned public buildings such as libraries and shopping centres
 - parks with plenty of trees and shade



Tips to prepare your home before hot weather

If you can, consider some changes to your home to help keep it cooler. Changes could include installing blinds, curtains, external awnings, shutters or other shading to prevent sun shining on windows and insulating your home. More information is available at Your Home (www.yourhome.gov.au/live-adapt/adapting-climate-change).

Tips to keep yourself cool and hydrated in hot weather



Keep yourself cool

- Avoid being outdoors in the hottest part of the day.
- Limit physical activity to when it is cooler.
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothes.
- Wet your skin with cool water.
- Place cool packs or crushed ice in a damp towel loosely around your neck and shoulders.
- Take cool showers or baths or sit with your feet in cold water.
- When outdoors, apply sunscreen and wear sunglasses and a wide brim hat to protect your eyes, face, and scalp.



Keep your home cool

- Use air-conditioning, if available. If not available, use electric fans.
- Close curtains and blinds to block out the sun and spend time in the coolest area of your home.
- Use stoves and ovens as little as possible as these can heat up your home.
- When it gets cooler outside, open your windows and doors to allow warm air out and let cool air in.



Keep yourself hydrated

- Drink plenty of water regularly even if you don't feel thirsty (speak to your doctor if they have asked you to limit your fluid intake).
- Carry water with you when outdoors.



Stay connected

- Make a plan with family, friends and neighbours to keep in contact during hot weather and know who to call if you need help.
- Make sure you have contact details for your doctor, pharmacist, or other source of good health advice such as healthdirect.

For more information, advice and tips:



Scan the QR code or visit:
www.health.nsw.gov.au/beattheheat

For health information and advice
24 hours a day, 7 days a week phone
healthdirect on **1800 022 222**.

