

Prior to a Heatwave

Monitor the current situation by checking the Heatwave alert level on the internet (www.metoffice.gov.uk) or listening to local weather news.

Make sure you know what advice to give people at risk. A public information leaflet with tips on what to do in a heatwave is available from the Public Health England website as part of the suite a materials published with the Heatwave Plan for England.

People at particular risk should consult their GP about possible changes to their treatment and/or medication

During a Heatwave

How to keep out the heat

- Keep curtains on windows exposed to the sun closed while the temperature outside is higher than it is inside.
- Once the temperature outside has dropped lower than it is inside, open the windows. This may require late night visiting and such advice needs to be balanced by any possible security concerns.
- Water external and internal plants, and spray the ground outside windows with water (avoid creating slip hazards) to help cool the air. (However, check local drought water restrictions before using hosepipes).
- Advise the person to stay out of the sun, especially between the hours of 11.00am and 3.00pm.
- Advise them to stay in the shade and to wear hats, sunscreen, thin scarves and light clothing if going outside.

How to keep body temperatures down

- Ensure that the person reduces their level of physical exertion.
- Suggest they take regular cool showers or baths, or at least an overall body wash.
- Advise them to wear light, loose cotton clothes to absorb sweat and prevent skin irritation.
- Suggest that they sprinkle clothes with water regularly, and splash cool water on your face and the back of their neck.
- A damp cloth on the back of the neck helps temperature regulation.
- Advise them to drink regularly preferably water or fruit juice, but avoid alcohol and caffeine (tea, coffee, colas).
- Monitor their daily fluid intake, particularly if they have several carers or are not always able to drink unaided.
- Provide extra care
- Keep in regular contact throughout the heatwave, and try to arrange for someone to visit at least once a day.
- Keep giving advice on what to do to help keep cool.
- During extended periods of raised temperatures ensure that persons over the age of 65 are advised to increase their fluid intake to reduce the risk of blood-stream infections caused by Gram-negative bacteria.

Be alert as well as the specific symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke, watch out for signs that could be attributed to other causes, such as:

- Difficulty sleeping, drowsiness, faintness and changes in behaviour;
- Increased body temperature;
- Difficulty breathing and increased heart rate;
- Dehydration, nausea or vomiting; or
- Worsening health problems, especially of heart or respiratory system.

Emergency treatment

If you suspect someone has heatstroke, **call 999**. While waiting for the ambulance:

- Take the person's temperature;
- If possible, move them somewhere cooler;
- Cool them down as quickly as possible by giving them a cool shower, sprinkling them with water or wrapping them in a damp sheet, and using a fan to create an air current;
- Encourage them to drink fluids, if they are conscious;
- Give them a saline drip and oxygen if they are unwell; and
- Do not give aspirin or paracetamol.