SUMMER HEAT GUIDE

Staying safe in the heat



Many Australians can expect extreme heat this summer, from single scorching days to heatwaves – runs of unusually hot days, with warm nights that offer little relief.

Climate pollution, driven by the burning of coal, oil and gas, is already leading to hotter, longer and more intense heatwaves in Australia.

Extreme heat and heatwaves are known as silent killers – they cause more deaths than bushfires, floods, cyclones and storms combined.

As the days get hotter, it's important to keep cool and know how to look after yourself, your family and your furry friends during heatwaves or extremely hot days.

Top tips for beating the heat this summer

Get prepared:

Find out about your **local council's heatwave plan** and know where your local cooler places are.

Plan who you will check on, and who will check on you.

If you have a health condition ask your doctor how the heat could affect you or the medicines you take.

Have a plan for a power outage, such as a cool place you can go, and ways to cool down without power, like damp cloths or a cool shower.

During a heatwave

- Follow Bureau of Meteorology warnings and state health department advice.
- Download the University of Sydney HeatWatch app for personalised heat alerts - heatwatch.sydney.edu.au.
- Stay in cool places. If you don't have air conditioning at home, head to places that do, such as public libraries or shopping centres.
- Use a fan at temperatures below 40°C. They work better if you also dampen your skin or clothing.
- Close curtains and blinds, and open windows when it's cooler outside (providing you're not using air conditioning).
- Do essential outdoor tasks early in the day, and avoid strenuous activity during the hottest, sunniest hours.
- Drink plenty of water (an extra glass every hour) and limit or avoid alcohol.
- Wear light, loose clothing.
- Store medications as directed, and keep food properly refrigerated.
- Check on older people, babies, very young chldren and people with health conditions.
- Never leave children or pets in a parked car.
- Make sure pets have water and shade.

Who is most at risk

- People aged over 65 years.
- Babies and very young children.
- People who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- People with existing medical conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease and mental illness, or acute illness like vomiting or diarrhoea.
- People who are overweight or obese.
- People who work or exercise outdoors (even if they are fit and healthy).
- People who take medications that affect the way the body reacts to heat.
- People who are socially isolated or have limited choices in housing, work, transport or cooling.

Knowing the signs

Heat exhaustion

Signs include:

- Heavy sweating.
- Pale, cool and clammy skin.
- A fast, weak pulse.
- Dizziness, headache or fainting.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Muscle cramps.
- Tiredness or weakness.

Heatstroke

Signs include:

- A rise in body temperature (above 40°C).
- Red, hot, dry skin (though the person may still be sweaty if they have been exercising).
- Intense thirst.
- Rapid pulse and rapid, shallow breathing.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Aggressive or bizarre behaviour, confusion, poor coordination or slurred speech.
- Loss of consciousness, seizures or coma.

What to do

- Move them somewhere cool and shady, lie them down, and loosen or remove excess clothing.
- Cool them down as quickly as possible with a cold bath, shower or wet cloth.
- Stay with them the whole time, and keep checking they are awake and breathing normally.
- Give them small sips of water if they are fully conscious and able to swallow.
- If they stop responding and aren't breathing normally, start CPR.

If someone shows signs of heatstroke, call Triple Zero (000).

Core body temperature

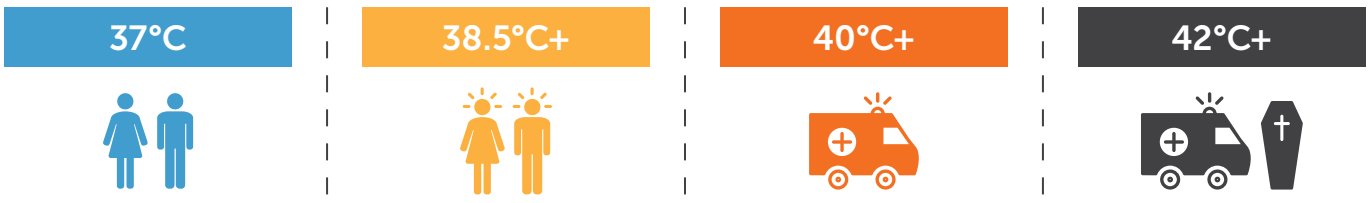


Figure 1: Temperature effects on the human body. **Source:** Adapted from Climate Council 2016.