

Staying cool without power on hot days

Information for communities impacted by power outages – February 2024

OFFICIAL

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Staying safe in hot weather

Prevent heat-related health problems by keeping cool and staying hydrated during hot weather. Plan ahead and check in with others.

Key messages

- Stay hydrated on hot days
- Wear light, loose fitting clothing
- Splash or spray cool water onto your skin
- Check in with family, friends and neighbours
- Watch the forecast and plan activities for the cooler times of the day.

Keep cool:

- Keep your skin wet using a spray bottle or damp sponge.
- Soak a towel in cool tap water and wrap it loosely around your head.
- Take cool showers or foot baths with cool tap water.
- Wrap ice cubes in a damp towel and drape around your neck.
- Wear light and loose-fitting clothing.
- Consider visiting an air-conditioned building such as a shopping centre or public library.
- Use blinds or curtains to block sun from shining directly through windows.
- Open windows and doors if you think it is hotter indoors than outdoors.

Stay hydrated:

- During hot days keep drinking water before you feel thirsty, especially if outdoors and performing physical activity. If your doctor has asked that you limit your fluid intake, ask them how much water you should drink during hot weather.
- Whenever you leave home, always take a water bottle with you.
- Watch for signs of dehydration like feeling thirsty, lightheaded, having a dry mouth, tiredness, having dark-coloured, strong-smelling urine or passing less urine than usual.

Plan ahead:

- Plan essential activities for the coolest part of the day. If you do have to go outside, take a water bottle with you, seek shade, and wear a hat and sunscreen for skin protection.
- Keep up to date with weather forecasts via TV or radio, check the Bureau of Meteorology.
- Stock up on food, water and medicines so you don't have to go out in the heat.
- Make sure that food and medicines are stored at appropriate temperatures.
- Have a cool-box available to store ice or cool packs with medications and stock up on food items that don't require refrigeration.

Check in with others

A quick call can make a big difference. Let family, friends and neighbours know you are OK or check in with those at increased risk or who may need your support during hot days or those without power.

Older people and hot weather

People over 65 years are more susceptible to heat-related health problems because their bodies are less able to adjust to changes in temperature. They are also more likely to have underlying medical conditions and be taking medication that may interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature.

Older people with medical conditions should review their care plan with their doctor to ensure that these conditions are well-controlled before the weather gets hot. Ask your doctor if you are at increased risk of heat-related health problems in hot weather. The doctor may advise that you adjust your fluid intake, avoid certain medications or adjust the dosage during periods of hot weather.

Children and hot weather

Babies and young children need special care during hot weather because they are less able to cope with changes in temperature:

- **Never leave babies or young children in cars.**
- Offer additional breast- or bottle-feeding to babies during hot weather and encourage children to drink regularly. The Australian Breastfeeding Association has more information about breastfeeding and hot weather.
- During hot weather, dress babies and children in light, loose-fitting clothing.
- Babies in strollers can be kept cool by covering the stroller with a moist muslin/cotton cloth, preferably with a battery-operated clip-on fan if available. Keep the covering wet with a spray bottle.
- Always supervise children and keep an eye on friends around bodies of water.

How you can help others

Help relatives and friends more at-risk of heat-related health problems by:

- Checking in with them regularly to see how they're coping, especially if they are living alone. Call them at least once on hot day. Ask them to call you if they have any concerns or just to check in.
- Seeking medical care immediately if they are showing any signs of heat-related health problems.
- Encouraging them to keep cool and stay hydrated.
- Offering to help by doing shopping or other errands so they can avoid the heat, if it's safe for you to do so.
- If it's safe to do so, taking them somewhere cool for the day (e.g., a shopping centre, a cinema, a library) or having them stay the night if they are unable to stay cool in their home.

Know the signs of heat-related health problems

Heat can cause serious and potentially fatal health problems such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke, can trigger sudden events like heart attack or stroke or can worsen existing medical conditions like kidney or lung disease.

Certain people are more at-risk, including people over the age of 65, babies and young children, pregnant women, people with acute or chronic health problems and people who are socially isolated.

If you need medical advice or someone you know is unwell, call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 for 24-hour health advice, see your doctor or contact the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department – for non-life-threatening emergencies.

In an emergency, always call Triple Zero 000.

For more information and symptoms on heat related health problems:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/heat-stress-and-heat-related-illness>