



Heatwave Advice

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN HOT WEATHER

The National Association of Care Catering

www.thenacc.co.uk



No One Should Go Hungry --- Dehydration in Older People Awareness Week 2011

The Health Risks

There are certain groups who are particularly at risk during a heatwave

These include

- Older people, especially those over 75 years old and/or those living in their own home or in a care home.
- People who have dementia and those who rely on others to manage their day to day activities.
- People who are not mobile and/or bedbound.
- People taking certain types of medication.

Where people live may also exacerbate the risk from extreme heat, lack of air conditioning, inability to open window, top floor flats and ground floor accommodation where people would be uncomfortable leaving windows open.

During a heatwave, there is a risk of developing heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Heatstroke can develop if symptoms of heat exhaustion are left untreated. It can happen suddenly and without warning. Heatstroke can result in organ failure, brain damage or death.

The Government have a heatwave plan and the core elements of the plan are

- A 'Heat Health watch' system is operated from the 1st June until 15th September based on Met Office forecasts, these will trigger levels of the response from the Department of Health and other bodies
- Extra help, where available from the voluntary sector, families and others to care for those most at risk
- Use of the media to get advice to people both quickly both before and during the heatwave

The 'Heat-Health' watch comprises of four levels of response, the average threshold temperature is 30C during the day and 15C overnight.

Level 1 Awareness – is the minimum state of vigilance – preparedness must be enhanced

Level 2 Alert - the Met Office will notify the Department of Health and relevant authorities

Level 3 Heatwave - the Met Office will issue the likely duration of the heatwave and temperature

Level 4 Emergency - this will be declared locally and nationally with Major incident status

What are the risks during a heatwave?

Those at higher risk may become dehydrated and their body overheat, leading to heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Heatstroke will develop if heat exhaustion is left untreated.

What is Heat Exhaustion?

Symptoms include dizziness, headache, nausea, sickness, shallow complexion and high body temperature.

Heat exhaustion occurs when body fluids are lost through sweating. The body overheats. A person's body temperature can rise up to one hundred and four degrees. Any higher body temperature rising can cause a heat stroke with organ and brain tissue damage. Heat exhaustion usually occurs in people who are not used to a hot and humid environment.

People sweat when hot and in very humid conditions, and the sweating ability may be affected. This causes loss of fluids, salts and electrolytes. When these are not replaced quickly enough, it can cause serious problems in circulation that may resemble shock.

Infants and the elderly are very vulnerable to this condition. Also, high blood pressure patients and people who have an impaired ability to sweat can fall victim to heat exhaustion very rapidly.

What is Heatstroke?

Symptoms include sickness, headaches, sleeplessness, intense thirst, red skin, confusion, aggression and convulsions even the loss of consciousness.

Heatstroke occurs when the body's ability to cool itself starts to fail. Our body keeps cool during excessive heat by sweating and circulatory changes. This causes the sweat glands to draw water from the blood so it can put water on our skin to cool us. Our body will pump more blood to keep the body cool; this is why excessive heat can put a strain on the heart. A healthy heart is more able to keep up with the demand of the body's need to pump blood during heat. The older you are, the more susceptible to heat illness and heatstroke you are.

People suffering from Heatstroke need to seek medical advice

Who is at Most Risk?

Whilst we can all be affected by the heat some of sections of society are at greater risk than others

- Older People
- People on some types of medication
- People with Mental Health Problems
- People with breathing and heart problems
- People with an infection or high temperature
- People who consume large amounts of alcohol or use illicit drugs
- People with mobility problems

How to deal with the Heat & Tips for those you care for

- Avoid going out in the hottest part of the day (try and take a “siesta” around lunchtime).
- If you go outside try and keep in the shade, wear a hat, and loose fitting clothing.
- Close the curtains in rooms which get a lot of sun.
- Open your windows at night for ventilation (consider having window locks fitted).
- Take cool baths and showers.
- Keep a cool cloth to wipe yourself with (particularly your face and neck).
- Drink regularly – water and fruit juice are best.
- Eat as you normally would but try to eat some cold food particularly fruit and salad which contains more water.
- Get advice from your doctor if you are taking medication which may cause problems in the heat.
- Keep an eye out for cramp in your arms, legs or stomach and feelings of mild confusion.
- If you live near an older person keep an eye on them, a visit daily is a good idea.

Heatwave Check List for Residential Care Homes & Day Centres

	Yes	No	Action
Can all Windows be opened & locked?			
Can windows be shaded (are curtains with lining and or blinds in place)?			
Are there shaded areas outside (parasols at tables etc) ?			
Have indoor thermometers been installed in all areas of the home?			
Do you adequate supply of fans ?			
Is water and ice available ? Have you got a stock of rehydration salts and orange juice? Remember : Bananas also help to maintain electrolyte balance			
Has the kitchen made provision within menus to include cold food, fruit and salads?			
Have you instigated more frequent checks of residents (body temperature, heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and hydration levels)?			
Do you need to instigate a fluid monitoring chart for every resident ?			
Have you got a plan if residents are becoming overheated? Are staffs aware of the signs of dehydration?			

Completed by

Date

An Information Sheet for those living in the community

Warm Weather .. Time for a Drink

It is forecast to be warmer over the next few days so ...

Remember to keep drinking fluids

Drinking helps maintain your body temperature, as well as helping with the following-

- Helps your mental performance, keeps you alert
- Prevents Falls through fainting
- Prevention of Pressure Sores
- Preventing Constipation
- Preventing Urinary Tract Infections
- Prevents Kidney & Gall stones
- Reduces the risk of Heart Disease
- Helps prevent Low Blood Pressure
- Drinking more water will improve your oral health
- If you have Diabetes, drinking helps you manage your illness

Drinking plenty of fluid keeps you healthier even if it's not too hot. Drinking will in most cases also help to reduce the amount of toilet visits you need.

Tips for increasing your fluid intake –

With any medication have a full glass of water.

Have a drink between meal times.

Always have a drink with you meal, not just a cuppa after.

Ask your carer to leave you a drink, so you can keep drinking throughout the day If you have a hot drink in a flask during the winter