

Number two



Top tips for hot weather

Guidance on heat related illness

Staff and volunteers should always be vigilant during a heatwave. They should make daily contact with vulnerable people (particularly older people) who live on their own, to check on their well-being.

Should staff become worried about the health of any of their service users then medical advice should be sought. With ageing it becomes more difficult for the body to retain its fluid balance and older people are at particular risk of dehydration. Other risk factors include medication, level of dependency and cognitive impairment including dementia. Be alert for unusual and persistent symptoms such as cramp in arms, legs or stomach, feelings of mild confusion, weakness or problems sleeping. Similarly should staff be concerned regarding their own or colleagues' health they should report this to their line manager and contact their GP if symptoms persist.

The main causes of illness during a heatwave are respiratory and cardiovascular and include:

- Heat cramps – caused by dehydration and loss of electrolytes, often after exercise
- Heat rash
- Heat oedema – mainly in ankles due to fluid retention
- Heat syncope – dizziness and fainting due to dehydration and certain medications etc. (syncope is the medical term for fainting)
- Heat exhaustion – occurs as a result of water or sodium depletion. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, muscle weakness or cramps, pale skin or a sudden rise in temperature. Left untreated it may evolve into heatstroke

If someone is suffering from worsening heart or respiratory symptoms or heat exhaustion they should be moved somewhere cool and encouraged to drink plenty of water or fruit juice. If possible, they should take a lukewarm shower, or sponge themselves with cold water.

- Heat stroke is a very serious condition. Symptoms include: headache, high temperature, heavy sweating that suddenly stops, confusion, fits, rapid breathing and a loss of consciousness

In the event of someone being taken ill with heatstroke, having dialled 999 and whilst waiting for the ambulance... if possible:

- Move the person to somewhere cooler or provide shade from direct sunlight if outside
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or using a fan
- Cool the person down as quickly as possible by loosening their clothes, sprinkling their face, back of the neck or wrists with cold water or wrapping them in a damp sheet
- If they are conscious, give them water or fruit juice to drink
- Do not give the person Aspirin or Paracetamol

