

# Heatwave?



## Important Contact Information

For medical advice telephone  
Healthdirect Australia on  
**1800 022 222**

For immediate medical assistance  
telephone **000**



For SES response telephone **132 500**

For life threatening emergencies  
telephone **000**

To volunteer visit [www.ses.sa.gov.au](http://www.ses.sa.gov.au) or  
telephone **1300 364 587**

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STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

# Heatwave

## Information Guide



# What is a

**A heatwave is an extended period of abnormally and uncomfortably hot and unusually humid weather.**

During the 20th century, heatwaves have caused more deaths in Australia than any other natural hazard.

With global warming resulting in rising temperatures and common extreme weather circumstances, summer heatwaves have become a part of life in Australia.

It is important that we prepare for heatwaves to ensure that we stay safe and well during these times.

This guide provides some simple steps to surviving a heatwave and also lists the signs to look out for in others to ensure everyone's safety.



# Are **you** prepared for the **heat**?

Extreme heat events can have a detrimental impact on communities. They affect many parts of everyday life such as health and wellbeing, energy and infrastructure, public transport and agriculture. They also create increased fire risk and heat stressed trees, which pose a significant threat to public safety.

There are three stages of heat stress which are outlined in this guide. The most serious health effect of extreme heat events is heat stroke, which is the failure of the body's temperature control system. Heat stroke can cause severe and permanent damage to vital organs. If not treated immediately, heat stroke can result in permanent disability and even death.

The good news is there are some simple things you can do to reduce the impact of extreme heat.

## Stay hydrated



You should drink two to three litres of water a day even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid 'fizzy', alcoholic and caffeinated drinks and do not take salt tablets (unless instructed to by a GP).

## Dress for summer



Lightweight, light coloured clothing reflects heat and sunlight and helps your body maintain a normal temperature.

## Check on those at risk



Visit at risk individuals such as the sick and elderly at least twice a day and keep an eye on children. Watch for signs of heat-related illness.

## Minimise sun exposure



Keep out of the sun as much as possible. If you must be in the sun, wear a shirt, hat and sunglasses. Also make sure you wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn, which limits the body's ability to cope with heat.

## Prepare your home



Prepare your home early. Service or replace your air conditioner BEFORE you need it. Curtains, awnings and blinds can also help to keep the home cool.

## Make use of air conditioning



If you don't have air conditioning, make use of public facilities such as shopping centres, art galleries, cinemas or other air conditioned buildings. Portable fans are also useful in drawing in cool air, or exhausting warm air from a room.

## Remember your pets



Pets can be particularly vulnerable to the heat. Make sure they have shade and plenty of cool water to last the day.

## Seek medical advice if necessary



Refer to the back of this brochure for contact details, or consult your GP.

## Who is most at risk?

The heat can affect anyone, but some people run a greater risk of serious harm. Those at serious risk include:

- elderly people
- babies and young children
- people with serious mental health problems
- people on certain medication
- people with serious chronic conditions (particularly breathing or heart problems)
- people who already have a high temperature
- people with mobility problems
- people who misuse alcohol or take illicit drugs
- people who are physically active, such as manual workers and sportspeople.

## HEAT STRESS SYMPTOMS AND FIRST AID TREATMENT

DISORDER	SYMPTOMS	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
<b>Unusual discomfort and heat cramps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy sweating</li> <li>• Thirst</li> <li>• Tiredness</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Prickly heat rash</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Muscle spasms, twitching</li> <li>• Moist, cool skin</li> <li>• Painful muscle cramps (limbs and abdomen).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink more water</li> <li>• Have a cold shower or bath</li> <li>• Lie in a cool place with legs supported and slightly elevated</li> <li>• Massage muscles gently to ease spasms, or firmly if cramped</li> <li>• Apply ice packs</li> <li>• Drink glucose</li> <li>• Do not have salt.</li> </ul>
<b>Heat exhaustion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profuse sweating</li> <li>• Cold clammy, pale skin</li> <li>• Fatigue, weakness and restlessness</li> <li>• Headache and vomiting</li> <li>• Weak but rapid pulse</li> <li>• Poor coordination</li> <li>• Normal temperature, but faintness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay victim down in a cool place as above</li> <li>• Loosen clothing and apply wet cloths to head and body</li> <li>• Fan, or move victim to an air conditioned area</li> <li>• Give sips of cold water</li> <li>• If vomiting continues, seek medical assistance immediately.</li> </ul>
<b>Heat stroke</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Skin flushed, hot and unusually dry</li> <li>• Dry swollen tongue</li> <li>• High body temperature</li> <li>• Rapid strong pulse at first, then weaker</li> <li>• Deep unconsciousness may develop rapidly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek medical advice urgently</li> <li>• Lay victim in cool place as above and remove outer clothing</li> <li>• Check airway and breathing (if unconscious)</li> <li>• Cool victim quickly, applying cold water, or wrap in a wet sheet and fan them</li> <li>• When conscious, give sips of water</li> <li>• For immediate medical assistance telephone <b>000</b>.</li> </ul>