

## Heat-related illnesses

Disorder	Symptoms	What to do
<b>Heat cramps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• muscle pains</li> <li>• spasms in the abdomen, arms or legs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop activity and sit quietly in a cool place</li> <li>• Increase fluid intake</li> <li>• Rest a few hours before returning to activity</li> <li>• Seek medical help if cramps persist</li> </ul>
<b>Heat exhaustion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pale complexion and sweating</li> <li>• rapid heart rate</li> <li>• muscle cramps, weakness</li> <li>• dizziness, headache</li> <li>• nausea, vomiting</li> <li>• fainting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get the person to a cool area and lie them down</li> <li>• Remove outer clothing</li> <li>• Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths</li> <li>• Seek medical advice</li> </ul>
<b>Heat stroke</b> (a life-threatening emergency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• same symptoms as heat exhaustion</li> <li>• dry skin with no sweating</li> <li>• mental condition worsens, confusion</li> <li>• seizure</li> <li>• appear to have a stroke or collapse</li> <li>• unconsciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call an ambulance</li> <li>• Get the person to a cool area and lie them down</li> <li>• Remove clothing</li> <li>• Wet skin with water, fanning continuously</li> <li>• Position an unconscious person on their side and clear the airway</li> </ul>

## Important contact information

For 24 hour health advice contact  
Nurse-on-Call on 1300 60 60 24

For life threatening emergencies  
telephone 000

For this brochure and other information in:

Arabic	Greek	Mandarin
Cantonese	Italian	Turkish
Croatian	Macedonian	Vietnamese

Please go to:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave)

Published by Victorian Government, Department of Health,  
Melbourne Victoria Australia  
December 2009

© Copyright State of Victoria, Department of Health, 2009.

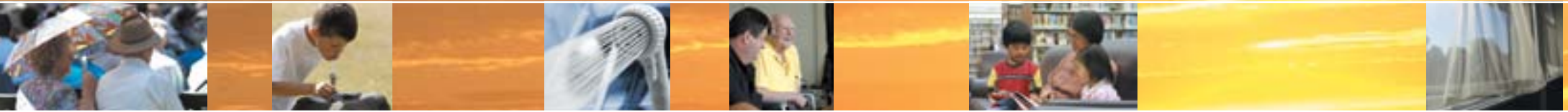
Also published on [www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave).

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street,  
Melbourne.

## Heatwave

Important health information for summer





## What is a heatwave?

A heatwave is a period of unusual and uncomfortable hot weather that could impact on human health, community infrastructure such as the power supply and public transport, and services.

Heatwaves can affect anybody and cause illnesses such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke which may be fatal.

Here are some things you can do to take care of yourself and look out for family, friends and neighbours who may need help coping with the heat.

## Who is most at risk?

Anyone can suffer from heat-related illness, but those most at risk are:

- people over 65 years old, particularly those living alone without air conditioning
- pregnant women, breast feeding mothers and infants
- the overweight or obese
- people with a chronic or mental illness
- people with health conditions that impair sweating
- people with limited or poor mobility
- people taking medications that may interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature.

## Coping with the heat

- Keep hydrated by drinking extra water, even if not thirsty. (Note: if your doctor normally limits your fluids, check how much to drink during hot weather).
- Look after yourself and check up on older, sick, or frail friends, neighbours and relatives.
- Spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings (for example shopping centres, libraries, cinemas, community centres).
- Keep yourself cool by using damp towels and taking cool showers in the day and night.
- If you must go out, stay in the shade and take plenty of water with you. Wear a hat and light-coloured, loose fitting clothing.
- Block out the sun during the day by closing curtains and blinds and open up windows and doors where there is a cool breeze.
- Watch out for news reports that provide more information during a heatwave.
- Do not leave children, adults or animals in parked vehicles.
- Avoid strenuous activity like sport, home improvements and gardening.

## Preparing for a heatwave

- Have your air-conditioner serviced.
- Look at the things you can do to make your home cooler such as installing awnings, shade cloth or external blinds on the sides of the house facing the sun.

## Preparing for a power failure

- Think about what you would do if a heatwave caused loss of electricity or disrupted public transport.
- In the event of a power outage, ensure you have a torch, fully-charged telephone or mobile phone, battery-operated radio and sufficient batteries.

