

# Heat exhaustion and heatstroke in children

Your child could get heat exhaustion if they:

- become too hot
- are not drinking enough fluids

Children do not sweat as much as adults. So they find it harder to stay cool. When its hot, you should make sure that babies and children drink enough fluids.

Heat exhaustion can turn into heatstroke if the body cannot cool down within 30 minutes. Heatstroke is a life-threatening medical emergency.

## Important

Heat exhaustion does not usually need emergency medical help if your child can cool down within 30 minutes. If it turns into heatstroke, it needs to be treated as an emergency.

## Check for signs of heat exhaustion

Children with heat exhaustion are usually tired, irritable or bad-tempered.

Other signs of heat exhaustion can include:

- intense thirst
- weakness or fainting
- cramps in the arms, legs or stomach
- no appetite, feeling sick or vomiting
- complaining of a headache
- sweating a lot
- pale clammy skin
- temperature of more than 38 degrees Celsius (but less than 40 degrees Celsius)

## Things you can do to cool your child down

If you think your child may have heat exhaustion:

1. Bring your child indoors if possible, ideally in a room with air conditioning, or into the shade away from the heat.
2. Undress your child and remove all unnecessary clothing like a jacket or socks.
3. Sponge their skin with cool water. Cool them as rapidly as you can. Place cold packs around their neck and armpits.
4. If your child is awake and acting normally, get them to drink a cold drink. If they are not fully awake or if they are very drowsy, do not try to force them to drink. Avoid caffeine as this can increase dehydration.

**Call 112 or 999 if your child has any of these symptoms:**

- is still unwell 30 minutes after being treated for heat exhaustion
- feels hot and dry
- is not sweating even though they are too hot
- has a severe headache
- has a very high temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or above
- has fast breathing or is short of breath
- is confused
- has a fit (seizure)
- loses consciousness
- is unresponsive

These are signs of heatstroke.

## Preventing heat exhaustion and heatstroke

To help prevent heat exhaustion and heat stroke, make sure your child:

- drinks plenty of cold drinks, especially when exercising
- takes cool baths or showers
- wears light-coloured and loose clothing - sprinkle water over skin or clothes
- is in the shade from the sun between 11am to 3pm
- avoids vigorous or very active outdoor play when the temperature is over 30 degrees Celsius

[Preventing sunburn in children](#)

## Heatstroke

Heatstroke is a life-threatening medical emergency.

Your child can get heatstroke if they are not able to cool their body down. Their body can get hotter and hotter. This causes their temperature to rise.

In severe cases, this can cause brain damage. If your child has heatstroke they need to get emergency treatment quickly. Treatment will help to bring their temperature down.

Children's bodies heat up much faster than adults' bodies. This is why children are more at risk of heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke can happen indoors as well as outdoors. Any environment that is too warm can lead to these conditions, including in a car or near a window on a hot day.

## Never leave a child in a car

A parked car can heat up by at least 10°C in just 10 minutes. Opening the window of a parked car does not help keep the inside of a car cool enough. Never leave a child in a car.

Internal organs start to shut down when the body's temperature reaches 40°C. Death can happen when it reaches 41.7°C.

## Preventing dehydration

Watch out for [signs of dehydration](#) in your child. If you think they are becoming dehydrated, speak to your GP or pharmacist for advice.

## Tips for keeping indoor spaces cool

Keep windows open at night if safe to do so. If not, open them early in the morning before it starts to get hot.

As it gets warmer outside and the air outside is warmer than the air inside, almost close the windows. Close the curtains or blinds in indoor spaces during the day to block out the sun.

Switch off lights and electric equipment you are not using. Use a room thermometer to make sure that the room your baby sleeps in is at the correct temperature (between 16 to 20 degrees Celsius).

Children should not sleep in direct sunlight.

[Your baby's sleep temperature](#)

Page last reviewed: 22 October 2022

Next review due: 22 October 2025

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