

HEATWAVE READY TASMANIA

Resources for residential
aged care facilities in Tasmania





Acknowledgements

Published by the Tasmanian Government
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Published November 2016

© Copyright State of Tasmania 2016

This document can be downloaded from Public Health Services
www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat
and Aged and Community Services Tasmania www.agedcaretas.org.au

This resource was developed by Public Health Services, DHHS through funding provided by the National Disaster Resilience Grant Program fund.

We acknowledge the Victorian Department of Health's *Residential aged care services heatwave ready resource* in the development of this resource.

We also acknowledge the support from Aged and Community Services Tasmania, the Tasmanian Climate Change Office and the pilot sites throughout Tasmania who contributed their expertise, knowledge and time in developing these resources.

Special acknowledgement to Christian Homes Tasmania for their outstanding contribution to the project.

CONTENTS

Heatwaves and health	4
How will my organisation know a heatwave is coming?	5
Heat-related conditions	6
CHECKLIST: Get prepared	7
CHECKLIST: During a heatwave	10
CHECKLIST: Once a heatwave has passed	11
TEMPLATE: Sample heatwave management policy	12
TEMPLATE: Heatwave incident action plan	14
TEMPLATE: Heatwave signage	16
Fact sheets	18
More information	23

This resource provides your organisation with guidance on what to do in a heatwave. Your organisation will be best prepared if you have a heatwave action plan, and staff are aware of the plan and know what to do.

This resource provides a checklist of what to do before a heatwave arrives, what to do during a heatwave, and what to do once the heatwave passes.

Templates are provided for a heatwave action plan and heatwave policy. These templates are designed to be adapted to your facility and for your specific needs.

Heatwaves and health

In the last 150 years, heatwaves have caused more deaths in Australia than all other natural disasters combined, including bushfires, floods and storms.¹

Many of these deaths are preventable.

While heatwaves are uncommon in Tasmania, they do occur, often suddenly and unexpectedly. This leaves little time to prepare and little time for individuals to adapt to the heat, particularly for the more vulnerable members of the community. Preparation before a heatwave arrives can potentially save lives.

Climate projections for Tasmania show heatwaves are expected to occur more often into the future. It is very important we are prepared to cope with these events and prevent heat illness and death among those under our care.



WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone is potentially at risk during extremely hot weather, but some people have a higher risk of becoming ill than others.

Many of those at high risk reside in aged care facilities. These include:

- older people, particularly the frail or over 65
- people with a serious chronic condition (heart, breathing problems, diabetes, serious mental illness, or those who are very overweight)
- people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease
- people taking medications that interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature
- people who have difficulty keeping cool (for example, those with a physical disability)
- a person with a high temperature from an existing infection
- anyone confined to bed.

It is very important that those at high risk have extra care during a heatwave.

1. Coates L, Haynes K, O'Brien J, McAnerney J, Dimer de Oliveira F 2014, "Exploring 167 years of vulnerability: An examination of extreme heat events in Australia 1844-2010", *Environmental Science and Policy*, vol. 42, p. 33-44.



How will my organisation know a heatwave is coming?

Many factors come into play when defining a heatwave. These include:

- the maximum and minimum daily forecast temperatures
- the temperature in recent weeks
- the number of forecast hot days in the immediate future.

Public Health Services use a heatwave alert system to determine the extent and severity of a forecast heatwave. The alert system takes the factors mentioned above into account. This system is similar to the Bureau of Meteorology's Heatwave Service for Australia (see www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave) but has more specific information for local Tasmanian conditions.

Public Health Services will email all affected residential aged care facilities when it has reviewed the information from the heatwave alert system. Public Health Services may follow this up with a phone call.

You should enact your organisation's heatwave action plan once you receive a heat alert from Public Health Services.

It is possible a heatwave will happen at the same time as a bushfire. If this occurs, you will also need to enact your bushfire action plan. These plans may have considerable overlap.

A NOTE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Effective planning before an emergency arrives will help reduce the consequences.

Emergency Planning for Aged Care Providers, available from Aged and Community Services Tasmania, will help your organisation identify the risks, develop emergency management plans and find resources to help with recovery.

Email admin@agedcaretas.org.au for more information.

Heat-related conditions

There are four stages of heat illness, with more serious consequences as the condition continues.

Dehydration: Symptoms include increased thirst, tiredness, irritability and dizziness. Make sure the affected person drinks plenty of fluid, stops activity immediately and is taken to a cool place to rest.

Heat cramps: Symptoms include muscle spasms or cramps in the limbs or abdomen. They may occur after strenuous activity in a hot environment. Make sure the affected person drinks plenty of fluid, stops activity immediately and is taken to a cool place to rest. Consider cooling them with a shower or bath. Do not let them return to activity for a few hours after the cramps subside.

Heat exhaustion: Symptoms include headaches, sweating, muscle weakness or cramps, fatigue, nausea or vomiting, dizziness and poor coordination. Seek medical help immediately if the affected person is elderly, and find them a cool place to rest. Make sure they drink fluids in small sips and cool them in any way possible.

Heat stroke: This is a life-threatening emergency. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea and aggressive or strange behaviour. Sweating has usually stopped and there is a rapid pulse and rapid breathing. Unconsciousness or seizures may develop. Seek medical help immediately and stay with the person. Cool them in any way possible.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke can happen suddenly and can quickly lead to unconsciousness and death.

If you think someone has heat stroke, call 000 immediately for an ambulance.

While waiting for the ambulance to arrive:

- move the affected person to somewhere cooler if possible and keep them still
- bring their temperature down by any method possible – for example, sponging with cool water or soaking their clothes with cool water
- place damp cloths or cool packs under their armpits, in their groin, on the back of their neck and on their forehead to cool them down as quickly as possible
- use a fan if one is available, or hand-fan with a book or something similar
- do not give aspirin or paracetamol to a person affected by heat, as this may cause liver or kidney damage.

Stay with them until the ambulance arrives. If they are unconscious – check their airway for breathing and monitor their pulse rate until the ambulance arrives.

CHECKLIST:

Get prepared

Planning ahead and being prepared for extreme heat is important. Your organisation can do several things to prepare for hot weather.

The following checklist will help with getting prepared for extreme heat.



Policy procedures and protocols

- ☐ Does your organisation have a heatwave management policy?
(see template on page 12 of this document)
- ☐ Does your organisation have a heatwave action plan?
(see template on page 14 of this document)
- ☐ Does your organisation have a protocol to consult with GPs and pharmacists about the use of prescribed medications for residents during periods of extreme heat?
- ☐ Does your organisation have measures in place to deal with potential power outages during periods of extreme heat?
- ☐ Does your organisation have a protocol for monitoring the indoor temperature of all rooms in the facility?
- ☐ Does your organisation have a protocol in place to ensure increased availability and supply of cool drinks for residents, staff and visitors during a heat wave?
- ☐ Does your organisation have plans in place for safe storage of food and drinks in the event of a power failure during periods of extreme heat?
- ☐ Does your organisation have plans in place for safe storage of medications in the event of a power failure during periods of extreme heat?

Resident needs

- ☐ Does your organisation have processes in place for proactively assessing a resident's health care needs in preparation for summer?
- ☐ Have you identified residents taking medications that increase the risk of heart stress (for example, psychotropics and cardiovascular medications)?
- ☐ Do residents at high risk have a relevant care plan to manage their needs during extreme heat?
- ☐ Has your organisation developed a summer menu for residents that allows for flexibility and adaptation during periods of extreme heat?
- ☐ Does each resident have an adequate supply of light, loose-fitting cotton clothing to wear in hot weather?

Staff needs

- ☐ Are staff trained and available to manage extreme heat events?
- ☐ Are staff trained in recognising the signs of heat illness and the policies regarding referral for health care?
- ☐ Is preparation for heatwaves covered in staff inductions, including relevant training on the use of air-conditioners, fans, refrigerators and freezers?
- ☐ Have all staff attended training so they are skilled to perform their duties in extreme heat?
- ☐ Does your organisation have plans in place to ensure sufficient staff are available during periods of extreme heat?
- ☐ Does your organisation have plans in place that cater for staff fatigue in periods of extreme heat?

Environment

- ☐ Is the facility designed to provide a cool environment in the residents' rooms and in all communal living areas?
- ☐ Has your organisation completed an environmental assessment of the facility to determine how buildings will remain cool in periods of extreme heat? Consider shade, air-conditioning, power supply, water cooling and insulation.
- ☐ Has a part of the facility been identified that could be used as a cool shelter in the event of power loss?
- ☐ Can all windows be shaded on the inside and outside of the building? Can windows in the facility be opened (where it is safe to do so)?

Equipment, services and supplies

- ☐ Does your organisation have the necessary technical and support service resources to manage in a heatwave?
- ☐ Are there sufficient air-conditioning units to properly provide a cool environment in all parts of the facility, including common rooms and resident bedrooms?
- ☐ Is there a plan in place to maintain air-conditioning units across the facility?
- ☐ Are fans in use across the facility? Are there sufficient test and tag procedures in place?
- ☐ Is there a plan in place to maintain all refrigerators and freezers across the facility?
- ☐ Does your organisation have access to thermometers to allow regular monitoring of air temperature around the facility?



MORE INFORMATION ON FANS

Fans are commonly used in residential aged care facilities. While they can help make people feel cooler and more comfortable, under certain conditions fans do not cool people down. This includes ceiling, portable and pedestal fans.

Remember:

- fans do not cool the air, they move the air around
- fans only help to cool people down by moving cooler air into a room and causing sweat to evaporate
- if the air is cooler outside, fans can help to bring cooler air into the building
- fans are not effective in cooling a person down on very humid days or when the indoor air temperature exceeds 35°C
- fans should not be used in rooms on days of high humidity and temperature where windows and doors are closed – this simply circulates the same hot air
- do not use a fan to blow air directly onto a person when the indoor air temperature is above 35°C.

CHECKLIST: During a heatwave

The following checklist will help residents and staff in the facility to cope during periods of extreme heat.

Policy procedures and protocols

- ☐ Has the heatwave action plan been enacted?

Resident needs

- ☐ Does your organisation have plans in place to regularly monitor residents' health during a heatwave?
-
- ☐ Is resident comfort being monitored regularly by ensuring room temperature is appropriate and loose-fitting, cotton clothing is worn?
-
- ☐ Does your organisation have protocols to provide residents with adequate fluids during a heatwave?
-
- ☐ Do high risk residents (for example, those taking medications that can increase the risk of heat-related illness or those with a current infection) have a care plan?
-
- ☐ Are residents being encouraged to avoid caffeinated drinks?
-
- ☐ Are residents being offered tepid sponges on a regular basis?
-
- ☐ Is resident movement and activity monitored to reduce outdoor exposure, including the use of entry and exit points to outside environments?

Staff needs

- ☐ Are staff monitored for wellness and signs of heat illness?
-
- ☐ Are staff being offered cool drinks and rest breaks?

Environment

- ☐ Are all bedrooms and common areas regularly monitored for temperature?
-
- ☐ Have windows been shaded both inside and outside (if applicable)?
-
- ☐ Is the identified cool shelter available and ready to use?

Equipment, services and supplies

- ☐ Are all refrigerators and freezers being regularly monitored for function and temperature?



CHECKLIST: Once a heatwave has passed

The following checklist will help residents and staff recover once the period of extreme heat has passed.

Policy procedures and protocols

- ☐ Does your organisation have plans to debrief and reflect on what would be done differently next time? Consider what went well and what didn't go so well.

Resident needs

- ☐ Are residents being monitored for signs of heat illness for some time after the heat has passed?
-
- ☐ Have medications and other care needs been reviewed?

Staff needs

- ☐ Are staff being monitored for signs of heat illness for some time after the heat has passed?
-
- ☐ Have staff been included in the debrief process?

Environment

- ☐ Can blinds be raised and windows opened if it is safe to do so?

Equipment, services and supplies

- ☐ Are all bedrooms and common rooms regularly monitored for temperature for some time after the heat has passed?

TEMPLATE:

Sample heatwave management policy

{Remove this section once your policy is complete}

The following template is a starting point to create a heatwave management policy for your organisation. It can be changed as needed to suit your specific needs.

Included in each section are prompts to {insert} information. Simply replace the bracketed words with the information requested. Some sections give prompts to {remove/add/delete as applicable}.

After you have developed your policy, it is a good idea to circulate it to employees for comment. You could do this through your employee intranet site, email distribution list or written memo. Remember to include employees who do not have regular access to internet and email (for example, maintenance employees).

You may also consider circulating this to residents and volunteers for feedback.

Once the policy is finalised and signed off by senior management, all residents and employees should receive a copy. The policy should also be included in any orientation material that is given to new residents and employees. Alternatively, a simplified version of the policy could be provided to residents and family.



Download this template in Microsoft Word format from the Department of Health and Human Services website:

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

HEATWAVE MANAGEMENT POLICY

for {Insert Facility Name}



Background

Heatwaves can affect human health, emergency services and community infrastructure. Specific groups of people are more vulnerable to effects of heatwaves, including:

- older people
- people with a disability or chronic illness
- people taking certain medications.

Residents of aged care facilities are likely to fall into these categories.

Mission statement

{Insert facility name} will provide residents, employees, volunteers and visitors with a safe and healthy environment in which to live, work and visit.

Objectives and strategies

{Insert facility name} will: {add and delete as appropriate}

- minimise the risk of heat stress to residents, employees, volunteers and visitors
- activate the heatwave incident action plan when a heatwave alert is received from the Department of Health and Human Services, the relevant Commonwealth body or Aged and Community Services Tasmania
- implement the procedure listed in this policy.

Responsibility and accountability

This policy applies to all residents, employees, volunteers and visitors to **{Insert facility name}**.

Procedure

When a heatwave alert is received, employees and volunteers (where appropriate) activate the *Heatwave Incident Action Plan*.

Communication

{Insert facility name} will ensure that {add and delete as appropriate}:

- all residents, employees and volunteers {receive a copy of this policy/are aware of this policy}
- this policy is easy to find
- residents, employees and volunteers are informed when a particular activity aligns with this policy
- residents, employees and volunteers can actively contribute and provide feedback to this policy
- residents, employees and volunteers are notified of all changes to this policy.

Monitoring and review

{Insert facility name} will review this policy {six/twelve} months after implementation and then every year. Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through:

- feedback from residents, employees, volunteers and visitors
- review of the policy by management to determine if all objectives have been met.

Name: {e.g. Care Coordinator}

Signature:

Manager: {e.g. CEO, General Manager}

Signature:

Date:

Date:

Version: 0.A Date of next review: XX/XX/XXXX

TEMPLATE:

Heatwave incident action plan

{Remove this section once your action plan is complete}

The following table outlines a sample action plan for your organisation when a heatwave alert is issued. Modify this template to suit your needs.

A range of stakeholders may be affected in this action plan, and you will need to determine:

- who they are
- what action needs to happen
- who is responsible for implementing the action
- when they need to do it.

Example stakeholder groups and appropriate actions are listed in red.



Download this template in Microsoft Word format from the Department of Health and Human Services website:

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

HEATWAVE INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

for {Insert Facility Name}

Who is affected?	What is the action?	Who is responsible?	When does it happen?	Completed?
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General Manager to notify all staff of forecast heatwave notification when received from DHHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When notification received from DHHS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Heatwave resources circulated to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clinical Nurse Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When notification received by the General Manager	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Appropriate signage placed at reception alerting staff and volunteers of forecast heatwave alert and appropriate actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Receptionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When notification received by the General Manager	
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor residents for heat illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nursing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commence medication care plans for high risk residents			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commence fluid balance charts for high risk residents			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure residents are wearing loose-fitting cotton clothing			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offer residents tepid sponges as needed			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce or restrict outdoor exposure for all residents			
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor storage of medications sensitive to heat			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide access to additional drinks or icy poles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nursing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encourage residents to avoid caffeinated drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Catering staff		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure appropriate meals are served for heatwave conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Catering staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor staff for heat illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nursing managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offer staff extra cool drinks and rest breaks			
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor temperature in all bedrooms and common areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nursing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Close internal blinds where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilities personnel		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Close external blinds where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilities/maintenance personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Check all air-conditioning units are working to specific temperature			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor refrigerators and freezers regularly for function and temperature			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure the identified cool shelter is available and ready to use			
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor volunteers for heat illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clinical Nurse ManagerNursing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor visitors for heat illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clinical Nurse ManagerNursing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During heatwave	

TEMPLATE:

Heatwave signage

{Remove this section once your signage is complete}

While all residents, staff, volunteers and visitors will clearly recognise the weather is hot, they may not be aware a heatwave alert is in place.

The following sign can be printed and placed at reception or any area of high traffic.



Download this template in Microsoft Word format from the Department of Health and Human Services website:

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

{Insert your logo}



HEATWAVE ALERT

A heatwave alert is in place.

To ensure resident health and safety:

- please do not take residents outdoors
- please notify nursing staff immediately if any resident appears unwell or uncomfortable.

Thank you for your cooperation.



Fact sheets

The following pages contain fact sheets for residents and carers. You can print these fact sheets and distribute in common areas around the facility or leave at reception during warm weather.



**Download these fact sheets in PDF format from the
Department of Health and Human Services website:**

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat



Extreme heat – health advice

Advice for older people

When it is very hot, you may be at increased risk of a heat-related illness, especially if you have a medical condition or take certain medicines. The following advice will help you to cope during extremely hot weather.

- Ask a family member or friend to check on you twice a day during extreme heat, especially if you live alone.

Signs of heat stress include:

- headache
- feeling dizzy, faint or weak
- increased thirst
- dark coloured urine, or urinating less often
- muscle spasms or cramps
- tiredness

If you start to feel ill with the symptoms of heat stress, you should seek medical attention by:

- calling *healthdirect* Australia on 1800 022 222
- calling your GP
- going to the Emergency Department of your nearest hospital.

If you have more serious symptoms of heat stress – vomiting, becoming confused, or having hot, red or dry skin because you have stopped sweating – immediately call 000 for an ambulance.

Keeping cool

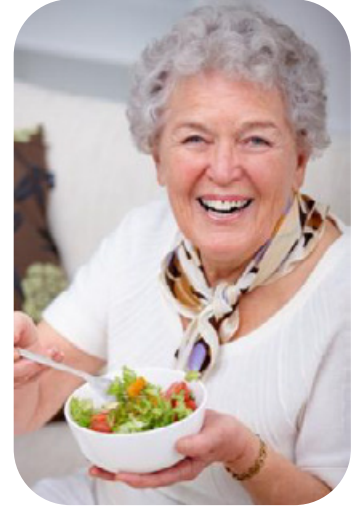
- Keep physical activities to a minimum and rest if you feel tired.
- If you have a fan, put a bowl of ice cubes in front of it to create a cool breeze.
- If you have air-conditioning, turn it on if your home is hot. Make sure it is set to 'cool'.



- Suck ice cubes made from water or cordial.
- Wet a cloth in cool water to wipe your face, neck and arms.
- Put your feet in a bowl of cool water.
- Sleep with just a sheet over you.
- Go to an air-conditioned shopping centre or local library for some relief from the heat.

Eating and drinking

- Drink plenty of water or diluted fruit juice even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid drinking tea, coffee or alcohol.
- Have a bottle of water with you at all times to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Eat smaller meals more often during hot weather. Cold foods such as salads and fruit help keep you hydrated. Use stoves or ovens less to keep your home cooler.
- Ensure that food needing refrigeration is not left out.



Clothing and personal aids

- Light-coloured and loose-fitting clothing, preferably made from natural fibres like cotton or linen, is best to wear. Avoid clothes made from synthetic fabrics.
- If going outside, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat (at least 7.5cm wide), or a legionnaire or bucket-style hat. Make sure it shades your face, neck and ears.
- Before going back inside, make sure you take your sunglasses off and take a few minutes to let your eyes adjust from the bright sunlight.
- Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen when outdoors (minimum SPF30+), even if not outside for long.
- If you use a wheelchair, walker or any other metal equipment, keep it in the shade as it can quickly become hot to touch and could cause a burn.

Medicines

- If you take prescribed medicines you must continue to take these during times of extreme heat.
- Some medicines can make you more prone to sunburn and heat stress, so take extra care to watch for signs that you may become affected by the heat.
- Speak to your doctor or a pharmacist if you need more advice on particular medicines.

For more information, visit www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

Extreme heat – health advice

Caring for an older person during extreme heat

An older person can be at increased risk of heat-related illness especially if they live alone, have a medical condition or take certain medicines. Being frail, not able to move as easily, having dementia or a mental illness, can affect an older person's ability to take adequate care of themselves in hot weather.

The following advice will help you, as a carer, to put together a plan to assist an older person to cope during extreme heat.

- Arrange to check on an older person twice a day during extreme heat, especially those living alone. Visit them if you can, rather than just talking on the phone. You need to make sure they are drinking enough water and be able to spot any changes to their physical condition.
- Make sure you know what to do for an older person if there is a power failure and how they will be kept cool if this happens.
- Check whether the older person's phone would work if there is no electricity, as some phones do not. If they have a safety alarm pendant, make sure this would also work if there is no power.
- It is very important that people who care for others also look after themselves in extreme heat, otherwise their own health may be at risk, as well as their ability to care for others.

Keeping cool

- Encourage an older person to use a fan or air-conditioner if they have one. Check the air-conditioner is set to 'cool' before turning it on.
- Look into what concessions are available on energy bills, as some older people are worried about using their fans or air-conditioner because of the costs. For further information and application details visit www.concessions.tas.gov.au or call (03) 6232 7050.
- Taking an older person to an air-conditioned local library or shopping centre can offer them, and you, some relief during extreme heat.
- Encourage an older person to take simple steps to keep cool such as:
 - using a cool, wet cloth to wipe their arms and neck, or putting their feet in a bowl of cool water
 - making water or cordial ice cubes to suck when hot
 - putting a bowl of ice cubes in front of a fan to create a cool breeze
 - sleeping with just a sheet over them.
- Be on the lookout for symptoms of heat-related illness, such as increased thirst, tiredness, feeling dizzy or faint, muscle spasms or cramps, headache, or loss of appetite.
- If an older person seems to be suffering from heat stress, they need to be cooled down straightaway. Use cool baths or showers, or place cool, wet towels on their neck and underarms.

- **Call a doctor or an ambulance (000) if their condition does not improve within an hour after taking steps to cool them down, or if they have any heat-related symptoms that are causing concern.**

Eating and drinking

- An older person may not always be able to tell when they are thirsty, so encourage them to drink water regularly, unless their doctor has advised them to limit the amount of fluid they drink. Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol.
- It is a good idea for an older person to have a bottle of water with them at all times in the heat to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Encourage them to eat smaller meals more often during hot weather. Using stoves or ovens less also keeps the temperature cooler in their home and reduces the risk of accidentally leaving them on.
- Ensure that food needing refrigeration is not left out.

Clothing and personal aids

- As the ageing process causes an older person to have reduced circulation and a lessened ability to sweat, they may dress in clothing that can cause them to overheat. Encourage them to wear lightweight, light-coloured and loose fitting clothing. Natural fibres like cotton or linen are best, not synthetic or nylon fabrics.
- Broad-spectrum sunscreen (minimum SPF30+) should always be worn by an older person, even if they only go outside for a short time – their skin is much thinner and can burn easily. It should be applied under the sleeves and collar of a blouse or shirt where the neck is exposed and on the legs/feet if wearing shorts or sandals.
- Wearing a wide-brimmed hat (at least 7.5cm wide), or a legionnaire or bucket-style hat that shades the face, neck and ears is important.
- Sunglasses should always be worn outside and taken off before going inside to prevent an accident. Pausing inside for a few minutes is a good idea to help eyes adjust from the bright sunlight.
- Check that an older person's wheelchair, walker and other metal equipment they use does not become hot to touch, as this can cause a burn.



Medicines

- If an older person takes prescribed medicines they **must** continue to take these during times of extreme heat.
- Some medicines can make them more prone to sunburn and heat stress, so extra care should be taken to watch for signs they are becoming affected by the heat.
- Speak to a doctor or a pharmacist if you need more advice on particular medicines.

For more information, visit www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat



More information

Download information on coping during extreme heat from
www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

The following phone numbers and web addresses may help in extreme heat.

- Police, Fire, Ambulance: **000**
- Tasmanian Government Emergency website: www.alert.tas.gov.au
- Bushfire information: www.fire.tas.gov.au
- State Emergency Service: **132 500**
or visit www.ses.tas.gov.au
- Public Health Hotline – Tasmania: **1800 671 738**
- Bureau of Meteorology weather forecast: www.bom.gov.au/tas
- Power outages: **132 004**
or visit www.tasnetworks.com.au/your-property/outages/current-power-outages
- ABC Local Radio
 - Bicheno 89.7 FM Launceston 102.7 FM
 - Burnie 102.5 FM North East Tasmania 97.1 FM
 - Devonport 100.5 FM Strahan 107.5 FM
 - Hobart 936 AM Swansea 106.1 FM

For other regions, visit www.abc.net.au/hobart/programs/frequencyfinder.htm



Public Health Services
Department of Health and Human Services

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat

Public Health Hotline – Tasmania: **1800 671 738**



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department



Tasmanian
Government