

Stay cool and take charge of your health this summer



Older people in Australia need to take greater care in extreme hot weather.



Heat, humidity, and health

It's possible to take charge of your health in the heat. Recognising the dangers of heat, understanding your body's limits, and taking proactive steps can help you stay safe during the hottest days of the year.

Click [here](#) to hear Claire's warning about the dangers of heatwaves.



Stay safe in the heat

Extreme heat can cause your body a lot of stress. The good news is that heat stress is preventable. Follow these tips to stay safe:

- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water, even if you're not thirsty. If you're on fluid restrictions, talk with your doctor. Avoid alcohol and caffeine during extreme heatwaves as they contribute to dehydration.
- **Cool your body.** Take cool showers, soak your hands or feet in water, or apply damp cloths or icepacks to your neck, armpits, or groin. A gentle swim can also be refreshing, just stay hydrated and stick to shaded areas.
- **Stay in cool places.** Spend time in air-conditioned spaces like libraries, community cooling centres, or shaded areas with flowing air.
- **Avoid outdoor exercise.** Skip strenuous exercise, like gardening, golf, or tennis, during hot days, even if you've tolerated this in the past.
- **Dress smart.** Wear breathable, loose-fitting fabrics in light colours. Wear wide-brimmed hats if you go outside. Wet your shirt or hat for extra cooling.
- **Keep your home cool.** Use fans and AC, close curtains during the day, and open windows at night when it's cooler. Avoid using appliances that generate heat, such as ovens, clothes dryers, or hair dryers.
- **Stay connected.** If you live alone, check in regularly with friends or family members, and encourage them to do the same for you.

Why is heat a risk to your health?

Heatwaves can make underlying health issues worse, as your organs work hard to cool you down. It can worsen conditions like heart, lung, or kidney diseases and increase your risk of hospitalisation. This is especially the case if you have multiple chronic illnesses.

Your ability to cool down and recognise heat stress decreases as you age. This makes older adults especially vulnerable. Even if you've tolerated heat well in the past, it's important to know your limits and take proactive steps to stay safe.

Who is most at risk?

Your risk of heat stress increases when multiple of the following factors combine:

- Being 65 or older
- A heat index of 33C or higher (A heat index is a figure which considers how both the outdoor temperature and humidity combine to make you feel)
- Chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity
- Some medications can increase heat sensitivity (talk to your doctor or pharmacist)
- Outdoor activity, such as gardening or exercise
- Living alone, as it's harder to keep track of your health and take cooling measures without support
- Homes without air-conditioning (AC) or proper insulation, as they hold more heat
- Living in isolated or low socio-economic areas, where help or resources may be limited



Martin's story

Click [here](#) to hear Martin's story after being hospitalised for heat exhaustion.

Recognising the signs of heat stress

Early signs of heat stress can include:

- Heavy sweating
- Thirst
- Discomfort
- Headache
- Reduced alertness
- Irritability

These are warning signs that your body is struggling to cope with the heat. If untreated, heat stress can progress into more severe conditions like heat exhaustion or heatstroke, which can be life-threatening.



What to do if you feel heat stress

You can take these steps to cool down:

- Get to a cool, shaded place and lie down
- Wet your skin with cool damp cloth, mist, or cool water
- If lying down, you can submerge your hands and feet in cool water
- Drink plenty of water slowly
- Use icepacks (wrapped to protect your skin) under the [armpits, groin, or sides of the neck](#) to cool your body quickly

Stop heat stress before it becomes an emergency

If heat stress isn't managed, it can lead to heat exhaustion, where the body loses too much water and salt through sweating. Symptoms can include:

- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Anxiety
- Poor coordination

Important safety notice

Heat exhaustion can escalate into heatstroke. This is a life-threatening emergency where the body's temperature rises above 40C.

Symptoms can include:

- Confusion
- Unconsciousness
- Inability to drink fluids

If this happens, or if heat exhaustion persists longer than an hour, call triple zero (000) immediately.

[Learn more about the signs, symptoms, and treatment of heat related illness.](#)

Spread awareness, take action

Many older people in Australia don't recognise heatwaves as a serious risk to their health. By being aware of the dangers and taking simple steps, you can protect yourself and reduce the impact of extreme heat.

[Click here](#) to watch a video from Griffith University's ETHOs Team about how to get heatwave ready and stay safe during hot weather.

What you can do now

1. Share this article with friends or family to spread awareness about heat safety.
2. Look out for our next article in this series: *Keeping your house cool on a budget* for tips on improving your home's cooling efficiency.
3. Learn more about protecting yourself from extreme heat at Griffith University's [ETHOs Project](#)

Understanding how heat affects your body, recognising the early signs of heat stress, and adopting preventive measures will help you stay safe and healthy this summer. Take charge of your health today and enjoy a cooler, safer summer.

Get in touch with LiveUp

Everyone is different so some of these tips may work better for you than others.

If you need more information, get in touch with one of our helpful team on **1800 951 971**.

CONTACT US

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