



# Heat wave

## Individuals with physical or mental health conditions

### Introduction

Physical and mental health conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, along with certain medications taken for these conditions (e.g. medications for insomnia, depression, anxiety, or poor circulation), place individuals at a higher risk of health problems during periods of extreme heat – from both the condition and the direct effects of the extreme heat itself.

### Extra precautions to stay healthy and prevent heat related illnesses

- listen to weather reports on the radio and TV, and try to plan ahead for the hot days
- speak to your doctor so you are aware of your risks and how you should look after yourself in the extreme heat
- continue to take your prescribed medications as normal
- try to ensure your daily routine continues as normally as possible
- keep in regular contact (at least daily) with family, friends, and neighbours, especially if you live alone
- ensure you are aware of the signs of heat-related illnesses and what to do should you experience them
- see our general advice sheet [www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1299/2/heat\\_events.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1299/2/heat_events.pm)

### Keeping cool

- stay in a cool place and use your air-conditioner or a fan if you have one
- place a bowl of ice cubes in front of an electric fan for a cooling breeze
- rest and take naps in a cool darkened room
- use a spray bottle filled with water to cool your face and body
- place a wet face-flannel or towel on your head or neck
- intermittently have a cool shower or bath, or place your feet in a bowl of cold water
- sleep with just a sheet over you and wear few night clothes
- avoid going out in the hottest parts of the day if possible

### Drinking and eating

- try to drink extra fluid even if you don't feel thirsty
  - check with your doctor first how much you should drink in relation to your medical condition
- make ice cubes and suck on them to keep cool
- don't wait until you are thirsty to drink as you may already be dehydrated
- always carry a bottle of cold water with you when you go out



- eat small light meals more often (e.g. salads, fruit and vegetables) and less hot foods
- avoid drinking tea, coffee and alcohol as these can dehydrate you and make you feel hotter

## Clothing and outdoors protection

- when at home wear as little clothing as possible to help keep cool
- lightweight, loose fitting clothes allow sweat to evaporate from your body
- light coloured fabrics will reflect the light and heat and be cooler to wear
- natural fibre fabrics of cotton, linen and silk are better to wear as they absorb sweat, allow the skin to breathe and do not stick to the body in the same way as synthetic fabrics do
- wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses when outdoors
- apply, and re-apply regularly, sunscreen (SPF 30+) when outdoors (note that some medications can increase your risk of sunburn)

## What to do if you feel or become unwell

- contact your GP
- call healthdirect Australia: 1800 022 222
- attend your local Emergency Department
- call an ambulance on 000 for life threatening signs

**Remember: If you do not feel well seek medical assistance without delay.**

**This document is available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.**

