



Heat wave

Older children and teenagers

Introduction

Older children and early teenagers' bodies are generally smaller in size and weight than adults. This difference means they will absorb heat more rapidly in hot conditions and, therefore, are at an increased risk of developing heat related illnesses.

Additional risks specific to this group

- their bodies adjust at a slower rate than adults to rising temperatures
- they have a greater heat production with activity than adults
- they sweat less prior to puberty, making it harder for them to cool off
- they can lose body fluid (water) quickly, requiring them to consume more water, especially whilst exerting themselves (a fact that can often be ignored whilst exercising)
- chronic health problems, certain medications, recent illness resulting in diarrhoea and / or vomiting, or a previous heat related illness, increase their susceptibility to heat related problems
- obesity and heavy clothing (e.g. required for certain sporting activities) also increases susceptibility to heat

How to prevent harm from the heat

- **Drinking**
 - drink plenty of fluid, avoid caffeinated drinks (including energy drinks) as these can increase dehydration and
 - ensure your child/teenager has a bottle of water with them at all times if outside
- **Clothing and protective items**
 - light-coloured, lightweight, loose-fitting clothing (with SPF in the fabric if possible)
 - hats with neck protection
 - sunscreen (SPF 30+) if outside, and re-applied regularly if in the water
 - consider a small backpack to carry useful items (e.g. water, sunglasses, sunscreen, small flannel to wet and cool themselves with)



■ Outdoor activities

- limit in extremely hot weather
- educate your child to be aware of the signs of heat illness, and what they should do in the event they start to feel unwell
- stop playing and move to a cooler location to rest
- drink plenty of fluid
- inform someone quickly, preferably an adult, if they start to feel unwell
- inform your child's coach of any prior heat-related illnesses, physical conditions or medications that may result in an increased susceptibility to heat, and leave your emergency contact details with the coach
- children and teenagers should not be encouraged or forced to continue playing sport / exercising if they appear distressed or complain of feeling unwell
- take breaks every 15–30 minutes whilst exercising to drink and cool down
- drink at least 500–700mL every hour of cool water or a sports drink
- Some children may be at an increased risk of muscle cramps and spasms during outdoor activities. To help avoid this;
 - slowly get them used to the heat and humidity prior to partaking in exercise
 - ensure they eat and drink properly

What to do in the event of a heat related illness

- move the child or teenager to a cool place to lie down and rest
- remove excess clothing
- ensure they drink plenty of small sips of water
- apply cool cloths, cold water or ice packs (armpits and groins) to skin
- ensure they take it easy for the rest of the day
- **SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE IF THEIR CONDITION DOES NOT IMPROVE**
- *healthdirect* Australia: 1800 022 222
- contact your GP
- attend your local Emergency Department

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

