



# HEATWAVE

Most of us enjoy warm and sunny weather, but when it's too hot for too long there are health risks.

High temperatures can be extremely dangerous, and sometimes fatal, especially for:

- the elderly
- the very young
- people with chronic or long-term medical conditions

## What are the risks?

The main risks posed by a heatwave are:

- dehydration
- heat exhaustion and heatstroke

If you're worried about your health during a heatwave, talk to your GP, pharmacist, or visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Staying safe

### Stay out of the heat

- Keep out of the sun between 11am and 3pm
- Carry out strenuous outdoor activities, like DIY or gardening, during the cooler parts of the day (such as early morning)

- If you must go out, stay in the shade, wear a hat and apply suncream
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothes, preferably cotton

### Stay cool

- Stay inside, in the coolest rooms in your home
- Close the curtains in rooms that get a lot of sun
- Keep windows closed while the room is cooler than outside; open them when the temperature inside rises, and at night for ventilation
- Take cool showers or baths, and splash your face and the back of your neck with cool water regularly.

### Do not cool off in open water

This can be extremely dangerous. The only safe place to swim is in a swimming pool.

### Drink regularly

- Drink regularly even if you do not feel thirsty – water and fruit juice are best
- Avoid tea, coffee and alcohol
- Eat cold foods, particularly salads and fruit which contain water

## Seek advice

- Contact your doctor, a pharmacist or [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) if you're worried about your health during a heatwave, especially if you are taking medication, or have any unusual symptoms;
- Look after yourself and others, especially those at greater risk such as elderly people and children: symptoms of heat exhaustion include
  - headaches
  - dizziness
  - nausea and vomiting
  - muscle weakness or cramps
  - pale skin and a high temperature
- If you or someone you know experiences a sudden rise in temperature, confusion or loss of consciousness, heat stroke may have developed
- If you have these symptoms, rest for several hours, keep cool and drink water or fruit juice. Seek medical advice if you get worse or the symptoms don't go away.

## Fasting during a heatwave

During hot weather, dehydration is a common and serious risk when fasting (such as during Ramadan). It is important to balance food and fluid intake between fasts and especially to drink enough water.

Department of Health advice for those fasting:

- If you start to feel unwell, disoriented or confused, or collapse or faint, stop fasting and have a drink of water or other fluid. This is especially important for older adults and those with medical conditions
- Make sure to check on others in your community who may be at greater risk, including children to ensure they stay safe and healthy
- The Muslim Council of Britain has confirmed breaking fast in such conditions is allowable under Islamic law.

## Looking after pets

- Avoid taking your dog out in the middle of the day – change your routine if necessary
- Remember hot pavements can burn dogs' paws
- During the hottest part of the day keep your dog indoors with plenty of water
- Never leave your dog shut in a conservatory – they can become as hot as cars



## Dogs die in hot cars

- Never leave your dog in the car, even with a window open.
- If you see a dog in distress, call 999 or RSPCA 0300 1234 999.

## Heat Health Watch System

The Met Office runs a Heat Health Watch from 1 June to 15 September each year in association with Public Health England. The scheme has four levels based upon threshold maximum daytime and minimum night-time temperatures:

- Level 1 Awareness
- Level 2 Alert
- Level 3 Heatwave
- Level 4 Emergency

For the West Midlands region the threshold temperature is 30°C by day and 15°C overnight.

Public Health England review and update their national planning arrangements and associated guidance annually to ensure it remains current. The plan sets out what needs to happen before and during a severe heatwave in England, and includes specific measures to protect at-risk groups. This national plan is then used as a basis for local planning arrangements.

This document has been produced with help from:

[Shropshire Council Emergency Planning Unit](#)  
[National Risk Register](#)  
[Preparing for Emergencies](#)  
[West Mercia Community Risk Register](#)

