

Heatwave Preparedness

for People Living with a Disability or a Chronic Health Condition



There are some simple steps you can take to help you prepare for a heatwave. Learn what to do if you have a chronic health condition or disability, by reading this document alongside the Australian Red Cross RediPlan.

Heatwaves can kill. Extreme heat can be dangerous for anyone, but people with certain health conditions are at increased risk of heat-related illness. You may also be at increased risk if you are:

- over 65
- pregnant
- experiencing anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress
- new to an area or isolated

When temperatures climb, there are things you can do to stay safe and healthy and help others.

Before a Heatwave

Step 1: Get in the Know

- Learn the signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke at www.healthdirect.gov.au/heatstroke.
- Download the [Australian Red Cross First Aid App](#) or put this guide on your fridge.
- Check the daily forecast and familiarise yourself with the Bureau of Meteorology's heatwave categories and warnings at www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave.
- Get official information on how the heat may affect your health condition and precautions you can take. You might want to look at official websites for your health condition or talk to your doctor.

Step 2: Get Connected

- Identify your support network. Include people who can help you get things you need during and after a heatwave. This could be family, friends, neighbours, or a carer.
- Identify a support person in a different electricity grid whose house you can go to if you lose power in a heatwave. Consider if they will be home during the day and if they can transport you if you do not have your own transport.
- Write down important phone numbers including **Lifeline on 13 11 14, HealthDirect on 1800 022 222** and any medical services you can get advice from.
- Keep in touch with friends, neighbours, and relatives, particularly if they're unwell or isolated.

Step 3: Get Organised

- Look at the things you can do to make your home cooler such as installing shade cloths, or cooling units. Make sure existing cooling units are serviced and working.
- Consider buying personal cooling items, such as an ice vest or small fans. Get a cooling bag for water and medications.
- Determine if you are eligible for any medical energy rebates.
- Medical conditions can get worse in extreme heat. Make sure your conditions are well managed and put in place healthy behaviours, e.g., ensure you get adequate sleep.
- Stock up on food, water, and medicines. Put ice packs in the freezer.
- Investigate cooled locations in your local area e.g., community centres and their opening hours.
- Ensure you are storing medicines at the recommended temperature. Room temperature medications may need to be moved to a cooler location inside the house.
- Make a blackout plan, including how you will store medications and keep cool.
- Consider if you need to invest in a backup electricity generator to maintain cool conditions in the event of a power outage.

During a Heatwave

It is important to keep cool when the temperature heats up. There are many ways you can act:

- Stay inside and keep out of the heat as much as possible.
- Plan to do most of your activities early or late in the day.
- Ask for assistance to avoid outdoor activities, including transport.
- If you go outside, wear light clothes, a hat and sunscreen, and take water.
- Keep your home cool by closing the blinds, turning on fans or air conditioners and opening windows at night.
- Take cool showers or baths, splash yourself with cold water, or use a cool damp cloth to cool off.
- Cool off at an air-conditioned shopping centre, community centre, library, or your local swimming pool.
- Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol, tea, coffee, and sugary drinks.
- Eat small meals and cold foods like salads and fruit.
- Take notice of your health, including your energy levels, mood, and ability to think and plan. If you notice negative changes, take action to cool down and seek support from caregivers, crisis lines, and healthcare professionals.
- Ensure your pets are also well hydrated and have plenty of shade when they are outside.

If you're feeling unwell contact your doctor or ring **HealthDirect on 1800 022 222**.

If you or someone you know shows signs of heat stroke (fits, confusion, staggering), call 000 immediately.



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