



MIND THE WEATHER

Managing your health and wellbeing during hot weather

During hot weather, it is easy for your body to become dehydrated or overheat.

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke are caused by a rise in body temperature. Rises in body temperature are normally controlled by sweating which allows your body to cool. If you become too dehydrated to sweat, your body temperature can rise very fast. In high humidity, sweat is less likely to evaporate and may not cool your body like it does in low humidity - this can also lead to your body temperature rising fast and causing heat illness.

Heat illness covers a range of medical conditions that can happen when the body is unable to cope with the heat. They can be very serious if not treated and can result in permanent damage to vital organs or even death.

Why the risk?

Combinations of medical conditions during extreme heat events can make it hard to:

- Recognise when you're becoming affected by extreme heat
- Reduce your body heat through sweating
- Maintain healthy body fluid levels and hydration

Your medication in hot weather

Some psychiatric medication/medications (such as antidepressants, heart tablets, fluid tablets and sedatives) may affect your body's sensitivity to heat and sun and can increase the risk of heat stress.

If you are unsure of how your medication may affect you in hot weather, talk to your GP or pharmacist.

Heat illness symptoms

Signs and symptoms of heat illness include:

- Hot and dry skin
- Paleness
- Rapid heart rate
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea and vomiting
- Lack of sweating despite the heat
- Dizziness or weakness
- Worsening of pre-existing medical conditions

Do you feel you drink enough water?

Drinking water helps to reduce the risk of heat illness although 40% of people say they are not drinking the recommended amount of water according to the Neami National Health Prompt.

(Health Prompt Data, May-Nov 2016)

How to be prepared

There are a number of things that you can do to avoid the risk of heat illness:

Your body

- Drinking plenty of water (2-3 litres during hot weather. If you are on fluid tablets, discuss water intake with your doctor first)
- Limiting or avoiding alcohol and caffeine
- Modifying physical activity (e.g. exercise in the morning or night when it is cooler)
- Staying indoors, if possible in air-conditioning (shopping centres are air-conditioned)
- Taking a cool shower or bath
- Fanning air and applying a wet towel on skin
- Wearing lightweight, loose-fitting clothing
- Applying sunscreen at regular intervals while outdoors
- Staying in shaded areas when outdoors if possible
- Checking how to correctly store your medication
- If you have insulin, do not leave it in direct sunlight or in a hot car. Keep it in a cooler, but do not place it directly on ice or a gel pack

Your home

- Blocking out the sun at home during the day by closing curtains and blinds
- If it's safe to do so, open windows or doors when the sun goes down and it cools down outside
- While they do not cool the air, ceiling and portable fans can create air movement and help to carry heat away from your body, making you feel cooler
- Fill bottles or jugs with drinking water and keep them in a cool, dark place
- If you live in an at-risk area, you may like to contact your local council and ask to be placed on the Vulnerable Persons Register
- Talk to your Neami Support Worker about any concerns you may have or to develop a plan in case of extreme heat events

In an emergency

If the symptoms of heat illness do not go away or if you feel worse, contact your local doctor, go to the Emergency Department of your nearest hospital or call the ambulance on 000.

More information

For more information discuss with your Neami worker, GP, or refer to the web sites listed below.

References

- The Department of Health (Victoria)
www.health.vic.gov.au
- SA Health
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au
- Government of Western Australia-
Department of Health
www.health.wa.gov.au/home
- The Better Health Channel
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- The Victorian WorkCover Authority
www.vwa.vic.gov.au