

Queensland Health

# Heat health management

A practical guide to preparing  
your patients, staff and facility  
during extreme heat conditions



In collaboration with



**RACGP**  
Royal Australian College  
of General Practitioners

**DELIVERING**  
FOR QUEENSLAND



**Queensland**  
Government

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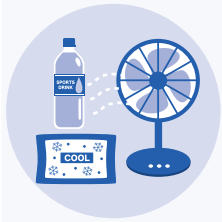
In Queensland, heatwaves are a recurring and serious concern during the summer months. Extreme heat events often lead to dangerous health conditions such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke, particularly among vulnerable groups.

Primary healthcare providers play a key role in reducing these risks. Prevention is the most effective safeguard from heat-related illnesses, and this checklist is designed to help you and your staff:

- prepare your facility
- identify vulnerable patients
- support patients at risk.

# Preparing your facility

YES / NO / NA



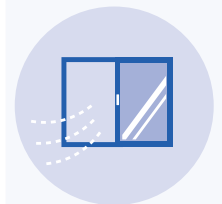
There is sufficient stock of essential supplies (e.g., electrolytes, fans, ice packs, hydration stations).



Heat health resources, such as the [Get Ready heatwave preparation checklist](#) and the [Queensland Health heat health posters](#), are displayed in public waiting rooms and staff rooms during the heatwave season.



There is an up-to-date heat emergency management plan in place.



The facility is a cool, well-ventilated space.



# Identifying patients at risk

		YES / NO / NA
	Staff are trained to recognise at-risk patients and know how to manage heat-related illness.	
	Staff are aware of the potential side effects of medicines and consider optimal dosing during periods of hot weather.	
	<p>A list of at-risk clients has been developed, accessible to relevant staff, of patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older persons, infants or young children</li> <li>- Overweight or obese</li> <li>- Pregnancy or breastfeeding</li> <li>- Low cardiovascular fitness level</li> </ul> </li> <li>• chronic illness</li> <li>• conditions that impair sweating</li> <li>• acute illness</li> <li>• impairment of activities of daily living (poor mobility, cognitive impairment)</li> <li>• social factors (access to cooling options in the home e.g. air conditioning, social connectedness e.g. living alone)</li> <li>• occupation/recreation in hot environments.</li> </ul>	
	Fluid intake and drug therapy is monitored, especially in older people and those with significant comorbidities.	
	Heat-related content is included in assessment tools and management plans for vulnerable patients. For example, consider adding a question in the over-75 health assessment that asks a patient to consider their personal care during extreme heat.	

# Supporting patients at risk

YES / NO



Do you know to increase fluids during hot weather, and what types of fluids? Have you discussed heat advice with your doctor, and do you have a heat plan for the coming season?

Do these plans have appropriate follow-up and supports in place, including:

- a care plan containing heat-specific advice
- contact details for your doctor and other care workers
- adequate arrangements for food shopping to reduce having to go outdoors during the heat.



If you have a carer, are they aware of your heat plan and the importance of keeping cool?



Have you used the HeatWatch website? It can help you to better understand your personal heat health risk and adaptation options.



Do you know how to adjust your behaviour to keep cool? For example:

- reduce excessive clothing
- using cooling devices at home
- avoid being outside during the hottest part of the day
- applying damp towels containing ice to the skin
- taking cool showers.

If you must leave the house, remember to stay in the shade when possible and wear a hat and sunscreen.



Do you know to increase fluids during hot weather, and what types of fluids?

- Check with your doctor how much water you should drink in hot weather. Don't avoid fluids during a period of extreme heat, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- The best treatment for mild dehydration is to drink more fluid, such as water or oral rehydration solutions to replace fluids and body salts. These are the best option if you are dehydrated and can be purchased from local pharmacies or supermarkets.
- Do not consume drinks that are high in sugar (e.g. flat lemonade or sports drinks), because they can make dehydration worse.

# Heat health resources

You can download the resources below via the download buttons.

## Fact sheets

**How to stay safe in a heatwave**

A heatwave is when it's hotter than usual for three days or more. Hot weather caused by a heatwave can make you sick.

Here are some ways you can stay safe

- Keep updated:** Watch the news or visit weather websites, like the Bureau of Meteorology.
- Stay connected:** Know who to call if you need help. Talk to your family and friends.
- Stay cool:** Make sure fans or air conditioners work. Find a cool place, like a library, to go if you don't have them.
- Get health advice:** Talk to your doctor about staying cool during hot weather, especially if you have health issues or if you cannot drink lots of water.
- Store essentials:** Have cold packs and spray bottles ready. You can buy these from supermarkets.
- Store items safely:** Keep food and medicine in cool places like your pantry or fridge.
- In case you lose power or electricity:** Have a torch, a charged phone, a battery-operated radio, and extra batteries.

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**Heatwave preparation checklist** **EVERYONE IS AT RISK OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS**

- Monitor the weather:** you can use the **Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave Service**.
  - Be aware of overnight and maximum daytime temperatures and how long the heatwave has gone for.
- Know who you will call for help.**
- Know who you will check on,** such as neighbours, friends, relatives and those who live alone.
- Know local cool public spaces** like libraries and shopping centres.
- Understand how to manage your medical condition** by asking your doctor.
  - If your medical condition will be affected by extreme heat.
  - How much water you should drink in hot weather, especially if you normally need to limit the amount you drink.
  - How your medications could affect your health in the heat.
- Store enough medication** at the right temperature.
- Prepare your home by:**
  - Storing cool packs in the fridge or freezer and making ice cubes.
  - Filling spray bottles with cool water to use on your face and body.
  - Checking fridges, freezers, fans and air conditioners work well.
  - Stocking up on food and drinking water.
  - Cleaning cool rooms and cross-berces in your house.
  - Protecting windows from the sun by using blinds or curtains.
- Pack an emergency kit** in case the power goes out.
  - This could include a torch, batteries, portable phone charger, candles, matches, a battery-operated radio and a first aid kit.

For more information visit [www.health.qld.gov.au/heatwave](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/heatwave)

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## Posters

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**Protect yourself**

Extreme hot weather can be dangerous

**You should:**

- Drink water:** Every 15-20 minutes while working.
- Check urine colour:** It should be pale or light yellow.
- Wear sun protection:** Light clothing, hat, SPF 30+ sunscreen, sunglasses.
- Rest and cool down:** Take breaks under shade and cool off with wet towels or a shower.
- Work in cooler hours:** If possible, work in early morning or late afternoon.
- Keep medicine and food safe:** Store in a cool, dry place, away from sunlight.

**If feeling unwell in the heat, cool down immediately!**

Heatstroke is when your body cannot cool down. This is serious. Seek medical help straightaway or call Triple Zero (000). You can ask for an interpreter for free.

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**Know the signs of Heatstroke**

Heatstroke is when your body cannot cool down.

**You might:**

- Feel confused**
- Struggle to talk**
- Breathe fast**
- Have a fast heartbeat**

**If you feel unwell in the heat:**

- Take a break**
- Find shade**
- Drink water**
- Cool down with a shower**

**If still feeling unwell, call Triple Zero (000)!**

Heatstroke is serious. Seek medical help straightaway or call Triple Zero (000). You can ask for an interpreter for free.

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The above posters are also available in **12 other languages** on the [Queensland Health Heat Safe website](http://Queensland Health Heat Safe website).

# Websites

[Queensland Health's heat safe webpage](#) provides information on heat-related illness and people at risk of heat-related health problems.



[Get Ready Queensland's heatwave resources](#) provide advice on the risks associated with heatwaves and how to prepare from them to reduce the impacts.



[WorkSafe Queensland's heat stress webpage](#) provides information about the causes and sources of heat stress in the workplace, types of heat-related illness and control measures.



The [Heatwave Service for Australia](#) forecasts local heatwaves, provided by the Bureau of Meteorology.



[HeatWatch](#) calculates a personalised heat health risk, based on current heat conditions and existing health conditions.

