

## Hot Weather Plan

The Heat-Health Watch system operates in England from 1st June – 15th September each year. Severe heat is dangerous to everyone. During a heatwave, when temperatures remain abnormally high over more than a couple of days, it can prove fatal. Heatwaves can happen suddenly, and rapid rises in temperature affect vulnerable people very rapidly. Careline operates a Heatwave Plan in line with Government, UKHSA and Local Authority guidelines.

A UK heatwave threshold is met when a location records a period of at least three consecutive days with daily maximum temperatures meeting or exceeding the heatwave temperature threshold.

This is somewhat different to the Heat-Health Alert service, which is primarily for health and social care professionals and emergency planners to take preparatory action when conditions are potentially posing a significant threat to health. It has certain trigger thresholds depending on the region. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) provides a Heat-Health Alert service for England. The Heat-Health Alert service has five response levels (Level 0–4) based upon threshold maximum daytime and minimum night-time temperatures. Each alert level should trigger a series of actions which are detailed in the Heatwave Plan for England, from long-term planning out of season, to summer and heatwave preparedness and action, to a major national emergency. These thresholds vary by region, but an average threshold temperature is 30°C by day and 15°C overnight for at least two consecutive days.

Staff are required to follow the below plan to ensure their safety and the safety of service users during hot weather or a heatwave.

### Heat Health Watch System Levels:

<b>Level 0</b>	<b>Long Term Planning to reduce risk from Heatwaves</b> All year
<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Heatwave and Summer Preparedness Programme</b> 1 June – 15 September
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Heatwave is forecast – Alert and Readiness</b> 60% risk of heatwave in the next 2-3 days
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Heatwave Action</b> Temperature reached in one or more Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service regions
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Major incident – Emergency Response</b> Central Government will declare a Level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged heatwave affecting sectors other than health

Heatwave warnings are issued by the Met Office by region and heatwave plans are implemented accordingly.

### Why is hot weather and a heatwave a problem?

The main risks posed by a heatwave are:

- not drinking enough water (dehydration)

- overheating, which can make symptoms worse for people who already have problems with their heart or breathing
- heat exhaustion and heatstroke

### **Who's most at risk?**

A heatwave can affect anyone, but the most vulnerable people are:

- older people – especially those over 75
- those who live on their own or in a care home
- people who have a serious or long term illness – including heart or lung conditions, diabetes, kidney disease, Parkinson's disease or some mental health conditions
- those who may find it hard to keep cool – babies and the very young, the bed bound, those with drug or alcohol addictions or with Alzheimer's disease
- people who spend a lot of time outside or in hot places – those who live in a top floor flat, the homeless or those whose jobs are outside
- Those whose jobs entail physical activity and exertion

### **Watch out for signs of heat related illness**

People with long-term and severe illness are likely to be at particular risk, including the following conditions:

- respiratory disease
- cardiovascular and cerebrovascular conditions
- diabetes and obesity
- severe mental illness
- Parkinson's disease and difficulties with mobility
- renal insufficiency
- peripheral vascular disease
- Alzheimer's or related diseases

If you or someone else feels unwell with a high temperature during hot weather, it may be heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

### **Heat exhaustion and heatstroke:**

**Heat exhaustion is not usually serious if you can cool down within 30 minutes. If it turns into heatstroke, it needs to be treated as an emergency.**

### **Check for signs of heat exhaustion**

The signs of heat exhaustion include:

- a headache
- dizziness and confusion
- loss of appetite and feeling sick
- excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
- cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- fast breathing or pulse
- a high temperature of 38C or above
- being very thirsty

The symptoms are often the same in adults and children, although children may become floppy and sleepy.

If you or someone else are showing signs of heat exhaustion, the body needs to be cooled down.

### **Things you can do to cool yourself or someone down**

If you or someone else has heat exhaustion, follow these 4 steps:

1. Move to a cool place.
2. Lie down and raise the feet slightly.
3. Drink plenty of water. Sports or rehydration drinks are OK.
4. Cool the skin – spray or sponge the skin with cool water and fan the skin. Cold packs around the armpits or neck are good, too.

The body should start to cool down and feel better within 30 minutes. If staff are concerned about themselves or someone else they should seek medical advice.

**Heatstroke can become a point of no return whereby the body's thermoregulation mechanism fails and leads to a medical emergency.**

**Immediate action is required if you or someone exhibits the following:**

- feeling unwell after 30 minutes of resting in a cool place and drinking plenty of water
- not sweating even while feeling too hot
- a high temperature of 40C or above
- fast breathing or shortness of breath
- feeling confused
- a fit (seizure)
- loss of consciousness
- not responsive

**If you suspect someone has heatstroke, call 999.**

While waiting for the ambulance:

1. Take the person's temperature.
2. If possible, move them somewhere cooler.
3. Cool them down as quickly as possible by giving them a cool shower, sprinkling them with water or wrapping them in a damp sheet, and using a fan to create an air current.
4. Encourage them to drink fluids if they are conscious.
5. Do not give aspirin or paracetamol.

**Preventing heat exhaustion and heatstroke:**

There's a high risk of heat exhaustion or heatstroke during hot weather or exercise. To help prevent heat exhaustion or heatstroke:

- drink plenty of cold drinks, especially when exercising
- take cool baths or showers
- wear light-coloured, loose clothing
- sprinkle water over skin or clothes
- avoid the sun between 11am and 3pm
- avoid excess alcohol
- avoid extreme exercise

This will also prevent dehydration and help your body keep itself cool.

Keep an eye on children, the elderly and people with long-term health conditions (like diabetes or heart problems) because they're more at risk of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

**Dehydration**

**Dehydration means your body loses more fluids than you take in. If it's not treated, it can get worse and become a serious problem.**

**Important**

Babies, children and the elderly are more at risk of dehydration.

### **Check if you or someone else is dehydrated**

Symptoms of dehydration in adults and children include:

- feeling thirsty
- dark yellow and strong-smelling pee
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- feeling tired
- a dry mouth, lips and eyes
- peeing little, and fewer than 4 times a day

Dehydration can happen more easily if you have:

- diabetes
- vomiting or diarrhoea
- been in the sun too long (heatstroke)
- drunk too much alcohol
- sweated too much after exercising
- a high temperature of 38C or more
- been taking medicines that make you pee more (diuretics)

### **How you can reduce the risk of dehydration in yourself or someone else**

Drink fluids when you feel any dehydration symptoms.

If you find it hard to drink because you feel sick or have been sick, start with small sips and then gradually drink more.

You should drink enough during the day so your pee is a pale clear colour.

Drink when there's a higher risk of dehydrating. For example, if you're vomiting, sweating or you have diarrhoea.

### **How you can make sure yourself and someone else drinks enough:**

Sometimes people do not have a sense of how much they're drinking.

To help yourself and others:

- Drink during mealtimes
- make drinking a social thing, like "having a cup of tea"
- choose food with a high water content – for example, soups, ice cream or jellies, or fruits like melon

### **When a heatwave is forecast for our area**

1. Make sure you have taken the steps outlined above.
2. Monitor the current situation by visiting [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk) or listening to local weather news.
3. Make sure you know what advice to give people at risk by following the above guidelines and advice

### **During a heatwave**

#### **How to keep out the heat**

1. Keep curtains on windows exposed to the sun closed while the temperature outside is higher than it is inside.

2. Once the temperature outside has dropped lower than it is inside, open the windows – (please ensure that security measures are adhered to).
3. Water external and internal plants, and spray the ground outside windows with water (avoid creating slip hazards) to help cool the air (however, check local drought water restrictions before using hosepipe).
4. Stay out of the sun, especially between the hours of 11am and 3pm.
5. Stay in the shade and to wear hats, sunscreen, thin scarves, and light clothing if going outside.

### **How to keep body temperatures down**

1. Reduce levels of physical exertion.
2. Take regular cool showers or baths, or at least an overall body wash.
3. Wear light, loose cotton clothes to absorb sweat and prevent skin irritation.
4. Sprinkle clothes with water regularly and splash cool water on the face and the back of the neck. A damp cloth on the back of the neck helps temperature regulation.
5. Choose cold food, particularly salads and fruit with a high-water content.
6. Drink regularly, preferably water or fruit juice, but avoid alcohol and caffeine (tea, coffee, colas)

As well as the specific symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke, watch out for signs that could be attributed to other causes, such as:

- difficulty sleeping, drowsiness, faintness, and changes in behaviour
- increased body temperature
- difficulty breathing and increased heart rate
- dehydration, nausea, or vomiting
- worsening health problems, especially of heart or respiratory system

If you have any concerns regarding anyone please ensure that you report this to the Careline office immediately on 0118 9585858.

**For more information please visit:**

[Supporting vulnerable people before and during a heatwave: for health and social care professionals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-vulnerable-people-before-and-during-a-heatwave-for-health-and-social-care-professionals)