

Elderly people need special care

when it's hot

Why is very hot weather dangerous?

Your body has its own way of stopping it from overheating. For example, in hot weather, you sweat. This cools your body. But when it is very hot, your body struggles to stay at the normal body temperature. If you don't drink lots of water and don't stay in the shade when it's hot, your body becomes dehydrated (dry). When your body is dehydrated, it can't work properly.

Very hot weather is even more dangerous for elderly people

Any of us may develop a heat illness. But people over 65 years of age are much more vulnerable to getting heat illnesses. Their risk is even greater if they also suffer from other illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes.



Why older people are more at risk

Older people don't sweat as much as younger adults. Also, fat is stored differently in older people's bodies. This makes it more difficult for their bodies to control body heat. People who are 65 years or older may very quickly move from being dehydrated to getting heat stroke. This is very dangerous.

Encourage everyone, and especially the elderly, to listen to weather warnings for high temperatures and heat waves. Let's support each other to prevent heat illnesses.

What are heat illnesses?

Heat rashes	Dehydration	Heat cramps	Heat exhaustion	Heat stroke
Very hot weather can give you a heat rash.	You are not putting enough water back into your body.	You get heat cramps when it is hot and you do energetic exercise.	You get heat exhaustion when your body hasn't been able to control its temperature, or get enough fluids that help you rehydrate.	Your body is shutting down. This is very serious. You can die.
Signs				
red pimples or small blisters – usually on the neck, chest, groin, under the breasts, and in elbow creases	- dry skin, lips and mouth - sunken eyes - get urine infections more often - get tired quickly - mind is confused	muscle pains – usually in the stomach, arms or legs	- heavy sweating - cool, moist skin - muscle cramps - tired, weak or dizzy - headache - nausea or vomiting - fainting - breathing is fast and shallow	- very little sweat – skin becomes dry - body temperature keeps going up - not able to walk straight - mental confusion - have a fit or collapses and become unconscious
What to do				
- keep the body dry - stay in a cool place - don't use creams - wear lightweight, loose, light coloured clothes A heat rash will usually go away on its own.	- drink water often and throughout the day - sit in a shady, cool place	- stop activity - sit in a cool place - rub the spasm gently - drink water - get medical help if the heat cramp does not go away after 1 hour	Get medical help. While you wait for medical help, encourage the person to: - take off heavy clothing. - drink water - have a cool shower, or sponge bath - rest and stay in cool shade.	Our normal body temperature is between 36.5 °C and 37.5 °C. When our body temperature gets too high (above 40 °C) it is very dangerous. This is a medical emergency. Get medical help now!

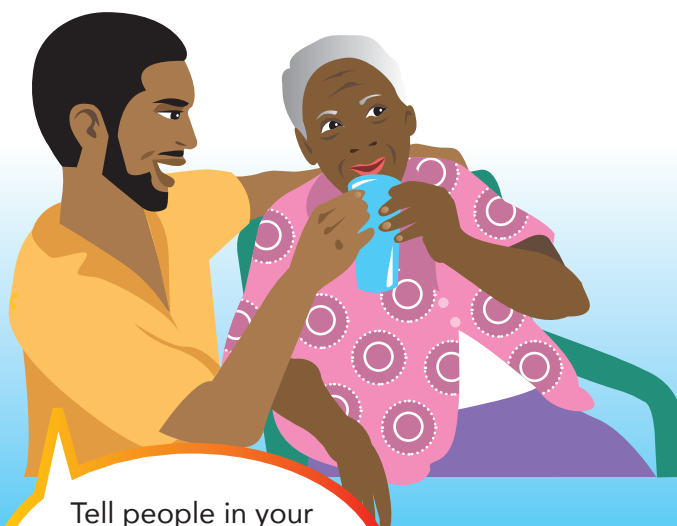


Prevent heat illnesses

Keep a careful watch on elderly people when it is very hot. Don't wait until they say they are thirsty to give them a drink. Help those who can't hold a cup themselves to drink.

Make sure they:

- drink water regularly during the day
- avoid drinks and food that dehydrate
- stay in the coolest places and always in the shade
- wear loose, lightweight, light coloured clothes
- rest and are properly cared for.



Tell people in your community about the signs of heat illnesses, and how to prevent them.

Drinks and foods that make dehydration worse

- anything that has caffeine, such as coffee and some teas
- all alcoholic drinks
- sugared drinks
- sugary fizzy drinks
- too much sugar
- a lot of fatty, salty food



Some medicines dehydrate

Ask a health worker whether any of the medication a person in your care is taking may worsen, or affect, dehydration. The health worker will tell you what to do.

