

Staying Healthy in the Heat

We've had a few pretty hot days and more are coming - how do we stay healthy in the heat?

What are the Biggest Threats to Health in Hot Weather?

- Over heating is the obvious threat – if your body gets too hot, it just can't function properly.
- Dehydration – The body needs water to function. Dehydration can be fatal.
- Sunburn – Even being out in the sun for short periods of time can lead to sunburn.

What Should We Eat and Drink in Heat?

- Eat light, cool food – lots of salads and fresh fruit.
- Cooking can heat the house so make things that cook quickly like stir fries or cook a BBQ outside.
- Drink lots of water – on a really hot day, up to 4 litres to replace what you sweat out. If you don't like water, herbal or fruit teas make a refreshing drink when cold.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol or sugary food and drink – they are dehydrating.

What Should We Wear?

- Wear cool, loose clothing – it's more comfortable and allows your skin to sweat.
- Wear light colours – dark colours absorb the heat and may make you feel hotter.
- Be sun smart – cover up, put on sunscreen and remember a hat and sunglasses.

What About Exercise?

- Exercise in air conditioning or the cooler part of the day – particularly the morning.
- Consider doing slower paced exercise on the hot days – yoga or Pilates – or go swimming.
- If you feel nauseous, dizzy or stop sweating while exercising, stop immediately, sit in a cool place and sip water. If you don't improve, call an ambulance.
- If doing something very strenuous, make sure you drink lots of water and maybe have some salt afterwards to avoid cramps. A banana is also good!

What's Heat Exhaustion?

- Heat exhaustion is when your body's temperature is between 37 and 40 degrees.
- Common symptoms are: dizziness, nausea or vomiting, fatigue and possibly collapse.
- If it happens, let the person lie in the shade, loosening any clothing, moistening the skin and letting them sip small amounts of water. If the person is unconscious – call an ambulance

What's Heat Stroke?

- Heat stroke is more serious because the body temperature is above 40 degrees.
- Common symptoms are: dry skin (no sweating), rapid breathing, loss of balance, headache, nausea or vomit, confusion, thirst, loss of consciousness.
- Heat stroke is a life threatening condition – call an ambulance.

What Else Should We Remember?

- If you're feeling uncomfortably warm have a cool shower or bath.
- Keep a couple of wet face cloths or a cold pack in the refrigerator – put them on the back of your neck to cool down.
- Remember your pets – they feel the heat too. Make sure they have plenty of fresh water and a cool place to lie. If they get too hot, wrap a wet towel around them.
- Check on neighbours – especially elderly people – to make sure they're okay and not dehydrated.