



# What to do in a “Heat Wave”

## What do we mean by “Heat Wave”

We mean a situation of intense heat, often with high humidity levels, covering a wide geographical area and lasting for several consecutive days.

## Who are in most danger?

- Children under 5 years old.
- Elderly people over 65 years old.
- People suffering from obesity.
- People who carry out activities that require physical effort and in places with heat sources.
- Sick people or people undergoing medication.

## What should we do on very hot days?

- **Drink plenty of liquid**, especially if you are carrying out a physical activity. Bear in mind that alcoholic drinks or drinks with caffeine increase the loss of liquids and they are therefore not highly recommended. Neither is it recommended to drink excessively cold drinks or highly sugared drinks.
- **Provide your body with mineral salts**, through drinks in order to replace those that are lost through sweat. Energy drinks for sportspeople are particularly suitable. If you drink these types of drinks or eat salty food and your consumption of salt is restricted by your doctor, check with your doctor before taking them.
- **Eat small amounts of food**, more often and preferably plenty of fruit and vegetables, and reduce protein rich foods such as meat.
- **Wear suitable clothing**. The most suitable clothing is thin, loose fitting items that cover as much of the body as possible and which should be light in colour.
- **Use protection against sunlight**. Do not expose yourself to the sun during periods of highest sun radiation and always using factor 15 or more sun cream protection which should be applied to exposed areas 30 minutes before going into the sun, before leaving home if necessary. Protect your head from the sun.
- **Avoid unnecessary physical effort**, during hot weather. Start exercising gradually and increase slowly. If you feel very tired, dizzy, confused or if you feel you are going to faint, stop whatever you are doing and rest in a cooler place in the shade.
- **Use air conditioning** if it is available, without excessively reducing the ambient temperature.
- **Plan your daily activities** for mornings or evenings when temperatures are not at their highest.
- **Keep a close check on children and elderly people**. People over 65 years old start to lose their ability to react to changes in temperature and their feeling of thirst is also altered. Check their condition and make sure they take in liquids.

- **Never leave children**, elderly people or pets in a parked car during periods of intense heat. Bear in mind that areas of sun and shade can change in a very short time.

## What problems can occur during a heat wave and how should we deal with them?

When the body can no longer regulate its own temperature because of the heat our temperature rises very quickly and gives rise to a situation commonly known as “heat stroke”.

### The symptoms are:

- High temperature.
- Red, hot and dry skin.
- Strong, fast pulse rate.
- Throbbing headaches.
- Dizziness, nausea and confusion.
- It is possible to lose consciousness.

### Treatment:

- Try to obtain medical attention.
- Reduce the body temperature taking the affected person to a cooler place and rub them with damp cloths or shower them.
- If the person is unconscious and vomiting, turn their head to one side and keep their breathing system free from obstructions.

## “Heat exhaustion” can also occur

### The symptoms are:

- Cool, moist skin.
- Fast, weak pulse rate.
- Fast, shallow breathing.

Without treatment a heart attack can arise, particularly if the affected person suffers from a heart condition.

### Treatment:

- Treatment is the same as for heat stroke, although the affected person may also be able to drink liquids – not alcoholic beverages.

Other common problems are “heat cramps”, that are treated through rest and by drinking diluted fruit juices or energy drinks for sportspeople. Sunburn is also common – these burns should be cooled and medical attention sought.

Remember that all the advice given above is of a very general nature; the specific recommendations for each person can be obtained from your doctor.

## Telephone number of interest:

**Emergencies Coordination Centre (CCE): 112**