

# How to prepare for a heatwave

Simple steps you can take to help when the weather heats up.

Learn how to stay cool, avoid risks and identify heat exhaustion and heat stroke.



Know



Connect



Organise



Act

## Know

Get in the know about the risk of heatwave and extreme hot weather

Heatwaves can kill. Extreme heat can be dangerous for anyone, but the risk of heat-related illness increases for:

- people aged over 65
- pregnant women
- babies and young children
- anyone experiencing anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress, or anyone with a medical condition that makes it hard to regulate their body temperature
- people new to an area or who are isolated

When temperatures climb, there are things you can do to stay safe and healthy, and help others.

- Learn the signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke at [redcross.org.au/heatstroke](http://redcross.org.au/heatstroke). Untreated, **heat exhaustion** can lead to **heatstroke**, a life-threatening condition that requires immediate medical attention.
- Download the Red Cross First Aid App from [redcross.org.au/firstaidapp](http://redcross.org.au/firstaidapp) or put this guide on your fridge.
- Check the daily forecast and get to know the Bureau of Meteorology's categories heatwave forecasts and warnings at [www.bom.gov.au/heatwave](http://www.bom.gov.au/heatwave)
- If you have a medical condition – particularly, cardiovascular disease or mental health illness – talk to your doctor about how heat may affect you.

## Connect

Get connected and prepare yourself and others before the mercury rises

Prepare your mind by thinking about how hot weather affects your moods and ability to think clearly. Get connected with these simple steps:

- identify three support people. Include people who can help you with practical assistance, such as shopping or drawing blinds, as well as emotional assistance and reassurance.
- download our Get Prepared App created in partnership with IAG, from [redcross.org.au/prepare](http://redcross.org.au/prepare) to help you prepare for any emergency
- write down important phone numbers including Lifeline on 13 11 14
- keep in touch with friends, neighbours and relatives, particularly if they're unwell or isolated

For more preparedness information  
[redcross.org.au/prepare](http://redcross.org.au/prepare)



# How to prepare for a heatwave

## Organise

Get organised with these straightforward ideas and tips

Before it heats up get prepared:

- look at the things you can do to make your home cooler, like installing awnings or shade cloths
- check fans and air-conditioners are working well and get them serviced
- stock up on food, water and medicines, and put ice blocks and packs in the freezer
- store medicines safely at the recommended temperature
- ensure you get adequate sleep

There are ways to keep cool when the temperature heats up:

- stay inside and keep out of the heat as much as possible
- plan shopping, appointments, exercise and outdoor work for early in the day, or ask someone to help
- if you go outside, wear light clothes, a hat and sunscreen, and take water
- keep your home cool by drawing the blinds, turning on fans or air-conditioners and opening doors and windows at night
- take cool showers, splash yourself with cold water, or use a cool damp cloth to cool off
- cool off at an air-conditioned shopping mall, community centre, library or your local swimming pool
- keep an eye on your mood and ability to think and plan. Seek support if you're worried
- drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol, tea, coffee and sugary drinks
- eat small meals and cold foods like salads and fruit



Babies and children are especially at risk from dehydration. Keep them safe by encouraging children to drink plenty of water. Watch for dark urine and check the frequency of nappy changes.

## Act

Get to know the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke

Heat exhaustion is a condition caused by your body overheating. Left untreated, it can lead to **heatstroke**, a life-threatening condition that occurs when your core body temperature reaches 40°C or higher.

- Learn how to recognise and treat signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Heat stroke is a serious condition. A person can collapse or fall unconscious. The signs and symptoms of heat stroke include:
  - red, hot and dry skin
  - rapid, strong pulse
  - rapid, noisy breathing
  - body temperature above 40°C
  - typically, no longer sweating
  - irrational or aggressive behaviour
  - deterioration of consciousness
- If you or someone you know shows signs of heat stroke, including fits, confusion and staggering, **call 000 immediately**.



Ensure pets are well hydrated and have plenty of shady spots outside.

For more information on how to prepare for a heatwave

[redcross.org.au/heatwave](https://redcross.org.au/heatwave)