

Effects of heat and sun exposure



in adults and children Heatwaves pose a challenge for the entire population, but especially for older people, children and those with medical conditions. High temperatures, direct sun exposure and high humidity can place considerable strain on health. Simple measures can help prevent excessive heat exposure and ensure an appropriate response if symptoms occur.

How can you avoid excessive exposure to sun and heat?

- Schedule errands and activities for the morning or evening hours.
- Avoid direct sunlight, particularly around midday.
- Eat easily digestible, low-fat foods such as vegetables, fruit and low-fat dairy products.
- Drink sufficient fluids, particularly water, unsweetened teas or well-diluted fruit juices.
 - Adults: 2.5–3 litres per day
 - Children: 50–80 millilitres per kilogram of body weight per day
- Avoid alcoholic, caffeinated and sugary drinks.
- If you are sweating heavily, electrolyte drinks can help replace lost minerals.
- Ensure appropriate sun protection: wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- When choosing sunscreen, ensure it has an adequate sun protection factor (SPF) (the fairer and more sensitive the skin, the higher the level of protection required) and provides both UVA and UVB protection.
- Children have less developed natural UV protection and therefore require a higher SPF of at least 30 or 50.
- Avoid excessive physical exertion.
- Adapt sporting activities to your level of fitness and wellbeing (untrained individuals should avoid strenuous exercise) and choose the cooler parts of the day whenever possible.
- Wear light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing.
- If you are taking medication, it is recommended that you consult your doctor, particularly if you are taking medication to lower blood pressure.

Heat advice helpline

The Heat Advice Helpline is available free of charge on **0800 880 800** and provides personalised advice on managing hot weather and preventing heat-related health problems.

Is your GP practice currently closed?

In most cases, it is enough to call when the practice next opens.

Not sure? Call 1450, the health advice helpline.

Further information and sources are available at www.wobinichrichtig.at.



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Heat-related conditions

Significant strain on the body caused by sun exposure or heat can trigger various conditions:

Sunstroke

- Excessive sun exposure to the head irritates the membranes surrounding the brain.
- Possible effects: headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and an elevated body temperature.

Heat cramps

- Heavy sweating during prolonged physical activity can lead to fluid loss and depletion of salts and minerals.
- Possible effects: severe muscle twitching and cramps in the hands, arms, thighs, calves or feet.

Heat exhaustion

- Excessive heat exposure combined with substantial fluid and mineral salt loss can lead to a range of symptoms.
- Possible effects: muscle cramps, dizziness, intense thirst, headache, nausea, blurred vision, light-headedness and exhaustion.

Heatstroke (most serious form):

- Extreme heat exposure can prevent the body from releasing heat effectively, causing a significant rise in body temperature.
- Possible effects: headache, nausea, hot, dry or flushed skin, elevated body temperature, increased heart rate, confusion, disorientation, impaired coordination and, in severe cases, loss of consciousness.
- WARNING: A body temperature above 40°C constitutes a life-threatening emergency.
- **Call the emergency services immediately on 144!**

What can you do yourself for heat-related symptoms?

- Move to a cool and quiet place.
- Consume salty drinks (e.g. electrolyte drinks) and foods.
- Cool your head and neck with damp cloths.
- Loosen any tight clothing.
- Rest. Your upper body should be kept slightly elevated while resting.

When should you seek immediate medical attention?

Seek urgent medical advice immediately:

- If there are signs of confusion or any other disturbance of brain function.
- If the condition does not improve quickly.
- In cases of heatstroke.

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