

# Staying safe during heatwaves

*A South Australian example*

## FACTSHEET



**LOW CARBON LIVING  
CRC**

An extreme heatwave is a period of successive days (three days in SA) when the temperature is considerably hotter than the concluding month and a 30-year average. Extreme heatwaves in Adelaide usually last up to three days.

In the summer 2014 Adelaide experienced 13 days over 40°C.



### Who is at risk during heatwaves?

Everyone is at risk during extremely hot weather, however some people have a higher risk:

- Older people, babies, young children and pregnant women
- People with high temperature from an existing infection
- People with a physical disability
- People who have dementia, Alzheimer's disease or a serious chronic condition (heart or breathing problems, diabetes, serious mental illness, or who are very overweight)
- People taking certain types of medications, including those that affect sweating and body temperature



### CRC for Low Carbon Living

We are a national research and innovation hub supported by the Commonwealth Government's Cooperative Research Centres programme that seeks to enable a globally competitive low carbon built environment sector.

With a focus on collaborative innovation, we bring together practitioners from industry and government with leading Australian researchers to develop new social, technological and policy tools for facilitating the development of low carbon products and services to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment. For more information visit [www.lowcarbonlivingcrc.com.au/](http://www.lowcarbonlivingcrc.com.au/)

### Being prepared for extreme heat

- Check local weather forecast regularly (at least daily)
- Make sure you have enough household essential consumables including bottled water to last for a few days
- Put together a small emergency-kit, a first-aid kit, thermometer and a list of important telephone numbers
- Check that fridges and freezers work properly
- Test fans and air-conditioners; check for natural ventilation opportunities
- Consider putting external and internal blinds, shutters or some other shading on windows
- Avoid dark reflective curtain linings and metal Venetian blinds
- Find the cool spot of your home to go to during extreme heat. Ideally the room or area in east or south facing
- Have some indoor plants to help your home to look and keep cool.
- Get advice from your doctor about whether your medication may affect what you should do when it gets extremely hot

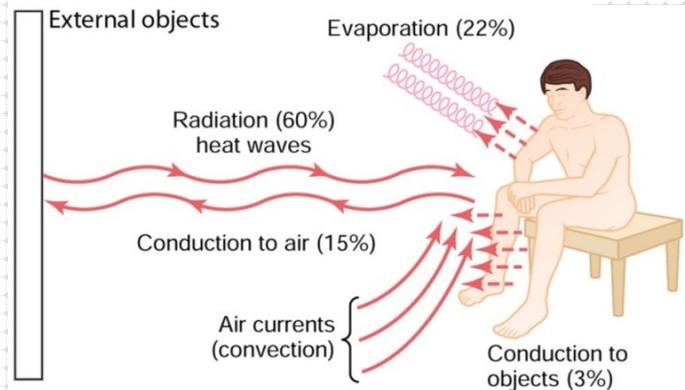
- Those who do not live close to other people and people who work outdoors.
- Talk to a neighbour, relative or close friend about keeping in contact during
- Extreme heat in case you, or they need any help
- Don't forget your pets.

## Once the weather is very hot

- Check radio, TV or Internet for information about the heat from SA Health or the SA State Emergency Service (SASES)
- Keep out of the direct sunshine and heat as much as possible
- Limit outdoor activities to early morning or evening
- Apply plenty of sunscreen when you are outdoors
- Never leave babies, children or pets alone in a car even if the air-conditioner is on
- Avoid strenuous activity like gardening, home improvements or vigorous sport. Keep physical activities to a minimum
- Draw blinds and curtains to keep out the heat during the day, using fan or air-conditioner as necessary
- Splash cool water on your face, back of the neck and feet, using a wet flannel or towel to wipe yourself down
- Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose fitting cotton clothing
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or take an umbrella with you for the shade
- Freeze a damp washcloth to use as a cool compress at night to keep your neck cool
- Have plenty of cold water and ice in the fridge. Continue to drink water or fruit juice even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Carry a bottle of cold water with you when away from your home.
- Avoid eating salty foods.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, tea or coffee as they can make dehydration worse.
- Avoid large meals. Try to eat more cold food such as salads and fruit
- If you have any symptoms, rest for a few hours, try to keep cool and drink plenty of water or fruit juice
- Take a cool shower or bath
- If heat symptoms do not go away or you start to feel worse, seek medical advice urgently:
  - contact your doctor
  - call health direct Australia on 1800 022 222 or
  - go to the Emergency Department of your nearest hospital

- If you think, your symptoms are serious call an ambulance immediately on 000

- Check daily on family, friends and neighbours, especially if they live on their own.



## After the extreme heat is over

- Continue to drink plenty of fluids so your body can get back in balance
- Open windows and doors to let your house cool down naturally without compromising your security
- Rest and recover as coping with extreme heat stress your body
- See your doctor if you feel unwell after the heat is over
- Contact family and friends to see if they need any help
- Reflect on how well you coped during the extreme heat and get ready for next time during extreme heat.

## Tips to remember

In most cases timely reaction can avoid heat-health disadvantages

- Do not risk your health for unnecessary activities
- Your head is the most vulnerable part of your body to heat, so protect it well
- Your feet are the second efficient part for cooling down your body. Treat them with water!
- Your body needs plenty of cold liquids to cope with the extreme heat
- Share your experiences with others especially younger generations - it can save lives.

Heat-health issue	Symptoms
<b>Heat Syncope</b>	Dizziness and fainting
<b>Heat Exhaustion</b>	Headaches; High temperature Profuse sweating; Cold, clammy pale skin Fatigue, weakness and restlessness Nausea and vomiting Weak but rapid pulse; Poor coordination Circulatory collapse
<b>Heatstroke</b>	Confusion, headaches, dizziness and nausea Skin flushed, hot and unusually dry Intense thirst; Dry, swollen tongue Sudden rise in high body temperature (40°C+) Disorientation, delirium; Slurred speech Aggressive or bizarre behavior Sleepiness; Convulsions Unconsciousness may develop rapidly Seizures or coma