

KEY MESSAGES FOR PREVENTING HEAT RELATED ILLNESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Stay out of the heat:

- ☀ keep out of the sun between 11.00am and 3.00pm;
- ☀ if you have to go out in the heat, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a hat and light scarf;
- ☀ avoid extreme physical exertion
- ☀ wear loose fitting light cotton clothes

Cool yourself down:

- ☀ avoid dehydration by having plenty of cold drinks, avoid excess alcohol and caffeine (tea, coffee, cola)
- ☀ eat cold foods, particularly salads and fruit with a high water content;
- ☀ take a cool shower, bath or body wash
- ☀ sprinkle water over the skin or clothing, or put a damp cloth on the back of your neck

Keep your environment cool:

- ☀ Keeping your living space cool is especially important for infants, the elderly or those with chronic health conditions or who can't look after themselves;
- ☀ Place a thermometer in your main living room and bedroom to keep a check on the temperature.
- ☀ Keep windows that are exposed to the sun closed during the day, and open windows at night when the temperature has dropped if you feel safe to do so.
- ☀ Close curtains that receive morning or afternoon sun. However, care should be taken with metal blinds and dark curtains, as these can absorb heat – consider replacing or putting reflective material in-between them and the window space;
- ☀ Turn off non-essential lights and electrical equipment – they generate heat;
- ☀ Keep indoor plants and bowls of water in the house as evaporation helps cool the air;
- ☀ If possible, move into a cooler room, especially for sleeping;
- ☀ Electric fans may provide some relief, if temperatures are below 35°C.

Longer term:

- ☀ consider putting up external shading outside windows;
- ☀ use pale, reflective external paints;
- ☀ grow trees and leafy plants near windows to act as natural air-conditioners

Look out for others:

- ☀ keep an eye on isolated, elderly, ill or very young people and make sure they are able to keep cool;
- ☀ ensure that babies, children or elderly people are not left alone in stationary cars;
- ☀ check on elderly or sick neighbours, family or friends every day during a heatwave;
- ☀ be alert and call a doctor or social services if someone is unwell or further help is needed.

If you have a health problem:

- ☀ keep medicines below 25°C or in the refrigerator (read the storage instructions on the packaging);
- ☀ seek medical advice if you are suffering from a chronic medical condition or taking multiple medications.

If you or others feel unwell:

- ☀ try to get help if you feel dizzy, weak, anxious or have intense thirst and headache; move to a cool place as soon as possible and measure your body temperature;
- ☀ drink some water or fruit juice to rehydrate;
- ☀ rest immediately in a cool place if you have painful muscular spasms (particularly in the legs, arms abdomen, in many cases after sustained exercise during very hot weather), and drink oral rehydration solutions containing electrolytes.
- ☀ medical attention is needed if heat cramps last more than one hour;
- ☀ consult your doctor if you feel unusual symptoms or if symptoms persist.

KEY MESSAGES FOR PREVENTING HEAT RELATED ILLNESS IN RESIDENTIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Level 1 – Long-term planning

- Prepare business continuity plans to cover the event of a heatwave (e.g. covering storage of
- medicines: computer resilience; etc.).
- Work with service commissioners to develop longer term plans to prepare for heatwaves.
- Make necessary environmental improvements to be able to provide a safe environment for patient's/persons in the event of a heatwave.
- Work with partners and staff to raise awareness of the impacts of severe heat on health and on risk reduction awareness, information and education.

Level 1 – Heatwave and Summer preparedness programme: Advance Preparations

▪ Buildings and Surroundings

- Check that windows can be shaded, preferably by curtains with pale, reflective linings rather than by metal venetian blinds and curtains with dark linings, which can make conditions worse. If these are fitted, check that they can be raised.
- Check that there are no problems opening windows while acknowledging safety and security considerations.
- Increase outside shading, in the form of shutters, shades, trees or leafy plants. Reflective paint can also assist in keeping the building cool. Increase outside greenery, especially in concreted areas, as it increases moisture content and aids cooling as a natural air conditioner.
- Create cool rooms or cool areas. High risk groups that are vulnerable to the effects of heat, physiologically find it hard to cool themselves efficiently once temperatures rise above 26°C
- Therefore, every care home should be able to provide a room or area that maintains a temperature at 26°C or below.
- Cool areas can be developed with appropriate indoor and outdoor shading, ventilation, the use of indoor and outdoor plants and, if necessary, air conditioning.
- Ensure that staff know which rooms are the easiest to keep cool and which are the most difficult
- and review the distribution of residents according to those most at risk.
- Indoor thermometers should be installed in each room in which vulnerable individuals spend substantial time (bedrooms, living and eating areas).
- During a heatwave, indoor temperatures should be monitored regularly (pro forma provided at Appendix 1)
- Electric fans may provide some relief, if temperatures are below 35°C.

Additional Notes use of fans:

- The use of a fan in a room where someone has a respiratory virus it should be risk assessed on a case by case basis.
- At temperatures above 35°C fans may not prevent heat related illness. Additionally, fans can cause excess dehydration. The advice is to place the fan at an appropriate distance from people, not aiming it directly on the body and to have regular drinks. This is especially important in the case of sick people confined to bed.)

Working Arrangements

- Ensure business continuity plans are in place and implement as required (sufficient staff must be available so that appropriate action can be taken in the event of a heatwave).
- Getting extra help from relatives of residents and volunteers.
- Providing an email address to local authority/NHS emergency planning officers, to facilitate the transfer of emergency information.

- Identify cool areas in the care home and in a person's home, Increase awareness of staff to heat-related illness and health protection measures.
- Identify a heatwave friend within the home

Facilities

- Check that you have an adequate supply of fans and water sprays.
- Install thermometers and record temperatures above 26°C during heatwave period using the chart at appendix 1.
- Check that water and ice are widely available. Ensure that you have a supply of oral rehydration salts, orange juice and bananas to help maintain electrolyte balance for those on diuretics. Caffeine and excess alcoholic drinks should be avoided.
- Arrange for cold drinks to be distributed regularly in the event of a heatwave.
- Plan to adapt menus to include a cold meal option for residents i.e. fruit and salads

Managers and Staff

- Managers are to ensure staff, individual and general risk assessments refer to covid-19 and heatwave planning and that they are regularly reviewed, this should include considerations for health, PPE, medications and regular breaks.
- Managers should review sessional staff working in Covid+ areas to ensure that these staff are able to take more regular breaks, free from wearing PPE and opportunities to re-hydrate.
- Staff should ensure they take more frequent shorter breaks rather than one long break whenever possible. Ensuring they are in areas where they can remove all PPE and rehydrate. Cold damp paper towels on the back of the neck can help cool.
- Changing facilities for staff should be identified, staff may need to shower and change uniform in between sessions on particularly hot/humid days, where possible windows should be left open and/or the extractor left on to improve air flow.

Residents/Cared for Person

- Identify those who are at particular risk and ensure the personal outcome plans and risk assessment are reviewed – ask primary care staff if you are unsure
- Ensure that you have protocols to monitor residents most at risk and to provide additional care and support (room temperature, body temperature, hydration will need to be monitored.)
- Ask the GPs of at-risk residents about possible changes in treatment or medication in the event of a heatwave and review residents on multiple medications.
- Check that residents have light, loose-fitting cotton clothing to wear and that access to lighter bed covers are considered at night.
- Be aware that plastic pads and mattresses can be particularly hot during a heatwave.

Monitor residents

- Check body temperature, breathing rates and hydration levels.
- Watch for any changes in behaviour, especially excessive drowsiness.
- Watch for signs of headache, unusual tiredness, weakness, giddiness, disorientation or sleeping problems.
- Where changes or symptoms are apparent, review support plan and risk assessments and check for changes to medications or signs of illness or abnormal or unusual sweating or heat loss.
- Inform residents of concerns and encourage them to inform staff of any changes they note.

Reduce the health risks of heat

- Encourage residents to remain in the coolest parts of the building as much as possible.
- Move residents so that each spends time in the cool room/area (below 26°C) – give priority and

- extra time to high-risk residents or any showing or informing you of signs of distress (including increased body temperature). For residents who can't be moved, or for whom a move might be too disorienting, take actions to cool them down (e.g. liquids, cool wipes) and enhance surveillance.
- Monitor residents' fluid intake, providing regular cold drinks, particularly if they are not always able to drink unaided. Oral rehydration salts are suggested for those on high doses of diuretics. Bananas, orange juice and occasional salty snacks can also help replace salts lost due to sweating.
- Advise residents to avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, colas), very sweet drinks and alcohol.
- Encourage residents to wear light, loose cotton clothes to absorb sweat and prevent skin irritation.
- Regularly sprinkle or spray cool water on exposed parts of the body. A damp cloth on the back of the neck helps with temperature regulation. Arrange cool showers or baths if possible.
- To try and lower the building temperature and give a natural flow through of air, open doors and windows particularly at night when the air is cooler and this will help to cool the building for the following day.