

3.2 Box 1 – Key Public Health Messages¹

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 light, loose-fitting cotton clothes.

Cool yourself down:

- Have plenty of cold drinks, and avoid excess alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks.
- 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 keep 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.
- 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.²

¹ Adapted from: [WHO Europe public health advice on preventing health effects of heat](#)

² NOTE: Use of Fans: At temperatures above 35C fans may not prevent heat related illness. Additionally fans can cause excess dehydration ([Cochrane Review](#)). The advice is to place the fan at a certain 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.

(Longer term)

- Consider putting up external shading outside windows.
- Use pale, reflective external paints.
- Have your loft and cavity walls insulated – this keeps the heat in when it is cold and out when it is hot.
- Grow trees and leafy plants near windows to act as natural air-conditioners (see 'Making the Case')

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 or 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.