

25 Jun 2020

## Heatwave reminder for mainland Europe

### Hot weather advice for travellers to mainland European countries

UK travellers are reminded to be aware of the risk of heatwaves in Europe, after last year's extreme temperatures [1]. This is particularly important this year, due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic [2].

Two major heatwaves occurred in Europe in late June and July 2019, with unusually high temperatures reported in many countries popular with UK tourists and travellers [1, 3].

Extreme temperatures are already being reported this year in some regions of Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden [4]. Turkey also confirmed an unprecedented heatwave in May this year [5].

Many will welcome hot weather, but intense heat can be dangerous [6]. In hot weather, our bodies work harder to maintain an inner core temperature, putting extra strain on the heart and lungs. This, along with fluid and salt loss caused by sweating, can lead to specific heat-related health problems; dehydration, overheating, [heat exhaustion and heatstroke](#) [6, 7]. Excess heat can also aggravate existing conditions, such as cardiovascular, respiratory and kidney diseases or mental health issues [2].

People shielding indoors from COVID-19, older people, those with underlying health conditions, babies and very young children are all more vulnerable to higher temperatures [7]. However, adverse health effects of hot weather are largely preventable if sensible precautions are taken, while also following COVID-19 prevention advice [4].

### Advice for travellers

Follow the latest official COVID-19 prevention advice offered by the country you are departing from or travelling to during this outbreak.

Check our [County Information pages](#) for specific guidance about your destination and see our [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\): general advice for travellers](#).

Carry cool water when travelling, drink plenty of fluids and avoid excess alcohol. Everyone is at risk of dehydration in hot temperatures, but babies, children and older people are particularly vulnerable [7]. Provide support where needed, while continuing to follow social distancing guidance [7].

Wear light, loose fitting cotton clothes, try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm, avoid physical exertion in the hottest parts of the day and try to walk in the shade.

Apply sunscreen frequently, especially after swimming and wear a hat and sunglasses as additional protection when you are outside.

Be aware of the additional heat stress that being in a parked car brings. Never leave anyone in a closed, parked car or vehicle, especially babies, young children or animals.

Take care at the beach or swimming pool when you go into the water to cool down and always follow local safety advice.

Look after for those who are vulnerable to heat, especially older travellers, young children, babies and anyone with underlying health conditions.

Stay cool indoors: open windows when the air feels cooler outside than inside; shade or cover windows exposed to direct sunlight; move to a cooler part of the house, especially for sleeping.

If you feel dizzy, weak or have intense thirst and a headache, move to a cool, shaded place to rest and drink water or fruit juice to rehydrate. Get urgent medical attention for any unusual or new symptoms such as confusion or vomiting. If you develop painful muscular cramps or other symptoms, like a persistent headache, you also need to seek help.

Some symptoms of heat-related illnesses, such as a high temperature, headache, loss of appetite, feeling dizzy or shortness of breath can be similar to symptoms of COVID-19. If you or someone else feels unwell with a high temperature during hot weather, you should consider the possibility of COVID-19 and/or heat-related illnesses [7].

## Resources

- [Met Office: Heat-health watch](#)
- [Public Health England: COVID-19 and summer temperatures](#)
- [Summer travel](#)
- [Sun protection](#)

## References

1. [World Meteorological Organization. 2019 concludes a decade of exceptional global heat and high-impact weather. 3 December 2019. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Preparing for a long, hot summer with COVID-19. 11 May 2020. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)
3. [World Meteorological Organization. European heatwave sets new temperature records. 2 July 2019. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)
4. [Network of European Meteorological Services. Meteoalarm – Weather warnings: Europe. 25 June 2020. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)
5. [World Meteorological Organization. May Temperature Records Broken at 117 Points Across Turkey – Turkish Meteorological Service. 22 June 2020. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)
6. [National Health Service. Heatwave: how to cope in hot weather. 28 June 2019. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)
7. [Public Health England. Hot weather warning issued to people shielding and more vulnerable groups. 24 June 2020. \[Accessed 25 June 2020\]](#)