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Heatwaves

Advice for travellers affected by heatwaves during their trip

Many will welcome hot weather, but intense heat can be dangerous [1]. 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](#) [1]. Excess heat can also aggravate existing health conditions [1].

Older people, those with underlying health conditions, babies and very young children are all more vulnerable to higher temperatures [1]. However, adverse health effects of hot weather are largely preventable if sensible precautions are taken [2].

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 [2]. Provide support where needed, while continuing to follow social distancing guidance [2].

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 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 other illnesses. If you or someone else feels unwell with a high temperature during hot weather, you should consider the possibility of travel-related illnesses and/or heat-related illnesses [2].

Resources

- [The Global Heat Health Information Network](#)
- [World Health Organization; heatwaves](#)
- [Summer travel](#)
- [Sun protection](#)

References

1. [National Health Service. Heatwave: how to cope in hot weather. 28 June 2019. \[Accessed 5 May 2022\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization. Heat and health. 2018. \[Accessed 5 May 2022\]](#)