



# PRIMARY CARE PREPAREDNESS

## HEAT HEALTH WARNINGS

December 2023

Extreme heat or heatwaves are a period of unusually hot weather that cause people to become ill from heat-stress or heatstroke – which can be fatal. Extreme heat can affect everyone, however those most at-risk are older people, young children and people with a medical condition. Extreme heat can also affect community infrastructure (such as power supply and public transport) and other services.

The Bureau of Meteorology issues heatwave warnings when 10 per cent or more of a weather district is in a severe or extreme heatwave. It is based on three days of unusually high maximum and minimum temperatures for that location. The Bureau uses three heatwave categories based on intensity: low, severe and extreme.

During severe heatwaves, vulnerable people are at-risk, while during an extreme heatwave everyone is at risk, even people who are considered healthy.

<b>Who is at-risk?</b>	Vulnerable populations include: the elderly, infants and children, people with co-morbidities, those who live alone or who are socially isolated, people with a cognitive impairment, people who have an alcohol or other substance use issue and those populations who live in certain environmental settings that make them more at risk of heat stress e.g. no air conditioning or other cooling means or a home that is particularly hot.
<b>Information for clinicians</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Extreme heat - information for clinicians</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Emergency preparedness in residential aged care - heat health</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Heat health plan for vulnerable mental health consumers</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Extreme heat factsheet for clinicians</a></li></ul>
<b>Other useful links and resources to share with patients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Extreme heat: supporting people by telephone</a></li><li>• <a href="#">How to cope and stay safe in extreme heat - printable factsheet</a></li><li>• <a href="#">How to cope and stay safe in extreme heat - brochure</a></li><li>• <a href="#">My Health Record</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Alternative after hours and emergency care options</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Heatwave Service for Australia</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Extreme heat - Better Health Channel</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Survive the heat - poster</a></li></ul>
<b>Keep up-to-date with HealthPathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Heat-related Illness</a></li></ul>
<b>Where to find more information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Subscribe to heat health warnings</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Heat Health Preparedness Guidance for primary health care services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Heat Health Preparedness Guidance for health and community services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Heat Health Preparedness Guidance for community service organisations</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Heat Health Preparedness Guidance for mental health services</a></li></ul>

<p><b>Update your emergency response documents</b></p>	<p>Preferably use the <a href="#">Emergency Response Planning Tool</a> (free to general practices until December 2024) and ensure staff are familiar with it.</p> <p>If using a paper system, store a copy off site.</p> <p>This will not only help you to stay focused and respond under pressure but get your business back up and running more quickly.</p>
<p><b>Ensure emergency contact details are up-to-date</b></p>	<p>So that Murray PHN can assist in coordinating support with government agencies during an emergency, make sure to let us know who your emergency contacts are via your Quality Improvement Consultant or: <a href="mailto:primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au">primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>Communicate service closures or impacts</b></p>	<p>Use social media and other platforms. Prepare a message or email to patients using appointment confirmation system or Pen CS if needed. Consider sending other important alerts, for example: to patients with asthma during epidemic thunderstorm asthma days.</p> <p>Use <a href="#">Pen CS and CAT Plus recipes</a> to identify relevant patient groups and send an SMS message to those patients who have not opted out.</p> <p>You will need to <a href="#">set up your account</a> and ensure you have enough credits in the system to send the messages.</p> <p><b>Inform Murray PHN of service closures or impacts:</b> <a href="mailto:primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au">primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>Plan staffing</b></p>	<p>In the event of no or reduced access to your site or staff absences, consider alternate models of work, alternate sites and equipment needs (ERPT can guide you through these considerations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the practitioners set up with ePrescribing so patients can obtain scripts immediately and remotely? Ensure paper scripts/prescribing pads are also available in the event that no internet is available.</li> <li>• Does the practice have an alternate contact number, or can you temporarily divert your practice number, so patients can call if the building is closed, and the phone system is inaccessible?</li> <li>• Can admin and clinical staff access your practice management and clinical software systems off site to facilitate remote models of care?</li> <li>• Ensure clinicians are able to create pathology and imaging requests if working remotely.</li> </ul> <p>Have information available to share with patients, such as the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department.</p>
<p><b>Join the emergency volunteer list</b></p>	<p>If you have capacity to support in an emergency event, register your interest using the <a href="#">online form</a>.</p>
<p><b>Do emergency exercise training</b></p>	<p>Undertake mock training incidents to ensure staff are competent and aware of their roles in the event of an emergency.</p>

## Contact us

For more information or support email [primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au](mailto:primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au)