



#BeatTheHeat

Information for the general public during heat waves

Extreme heat can put everyone at risk from heat illness. The risk is greatest for:

- Older adults,
- Infants and young children,
- People with chronic illnesses, such as breathing difficulties, heart conditions, or psychiatric illnesses,
- People who work in the heat,
- People who exercise in the heat.

Keep out of the heat

- As much as possible, it is best to avoid going outside between 10am and 4pm which are the hottest parts of the day.
- Keep to the shade while outside.
- Do not leave children or animals in parked cars.
- Avoid strenuous physical activity if possible. If it is not possible, carry it out in the coolest part of the day which is usually between 4am and 7am.
- Use the coolest room in the house, even at night.

Keep the body cool and hydrated

- Drink water regularly and in larger amounts. Don't wait till you are thirsty to drink. If you suffer from a chronic medical condition, ask your doctor for advice about how much to drink. Avoid alcohol, too much caffeine, and sugar.
- Take cool showers or baths or use cold packs, sponging, or foot baths to keep cool and fresh.
- Wear light and loose-fitting clothes. If you go outside, wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Apply sun block to exposed skin in adequate amounts and re-apply every two hours.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein.

Help others

- Check regularly, if possible, daily, on relatives, neighbours, and friends who are older or live alone.
- Read the storage instructions on the packaging of your medicines. Unless specifically stated that the medicine should be kept in a refrigerator, medicines should be stored in a dry cupboard away from sunlight at the recommended temperature. Products recommended to be stored between 2°C to 8°C are to be stored in a refrigerator.
- If you are suffering from a chronic condition, you may need specific medical advice.

If you or others feel unwell

- If you feel dizzy, weak, anxious, or have intense thirst and headache, try to get help, move to a cool place as soon as possible, and measure your body temperature.
- Drink water or fruit juice to rehydrate.
- Rest in a cool place if you have painful muscular spasms (especially in legs or arms, often after strenuous exercise in very hot weather). Rehydrate with oral rehydration solutions. Get medical advice if cramps last more than an hour.

For further information, please contact the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate (HPDP) on 23266000, or by email on healthpromotion.hpdp@gov.mt, or on our Facebook “Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate”, Twitter “HPDP Malta”, or Instagram “HPDP Malta” pages.

References:

Extreme Heat: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009.

Improving public health responses to extreme weather/heat-waves – Euro HEAT. World Health Organisation, 2009.

Public Health Advice on Preventing Health Effects of Heat. World Health Organisation, 2011.