

Beat the heat: Staying safe and healthy





With temperatures on the rise, understanding and preparing for heat waves is crucial for everyone, especially for the most vulnerable among us. This leaflet offers practical advice to help you and your loved ones stay safe.

What is a heatwave?

A heatwave in Malta is three or more days with daytime highs 5°C above the monthly average, often reaching 36°C or higher and sometimes lasting over a week.

What is heat health?

Heat health refers to the physical and mental health effects resulting from exposure to high temperatures, including heat-related illnesses and exacerbation of pre-existing conditions. Vulnerable groups are at higher risk during heatwaves.

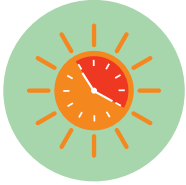
Who are the vulnerable people?

- Pregnant persons
- Infants and children up to four years old
- Those not having adequate cooling facilities in their home
- Older adults (over 65 years old)
- Overweight individuals
- People with chronic diseases such as heart failure, renal failure, diabetes, mental health disorders
- People living in heavily built environment
- Outdoor workers
- Individuals taking specific medications like antipsychotics and antihypertensives (consult a doctor before altering medication).





Tips for staying cool during a heatwave:



Avoid going out during peak heat hours (around 11:00 to 16:00).



When you go out seek shade and wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing made of natural materials.



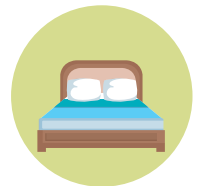
Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and apply sunscreen when going outside.



Take cool showers or baths.



Use cold packs, wet towels, sponging, or foot baths to cool down.



Use light bed linen.



Drink water regularly even if not thirsty. Avoid alcohol, caffeinated and sugary drinks. If you suffer from heart or kidney failure consult with your doctor on how much water you should drink.



Eat small, frequent meals making use of high-water fruits and vegetables like watermelon and cucumber.



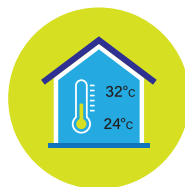
Prepare no-cook or minimal-cook meals. Opt for light, easily digestible meals like salads to stay hydrated and comfortable in hot weather.



Tips for staying cool during a heatwave:



Use air-conditioning if available. Check that air-conditioning units receive regular maintenance services and function properly before the hot season sets in.



Monitor room temperature, aiming to keep it below 32°C during the day and 24°C at night, especially for vulnerable individuals.



Open windows and shutters during cooler periods like early morning and night, and close them during the day, especially those facing the sun.



Minimise use of artificial lighting and electrical devices.



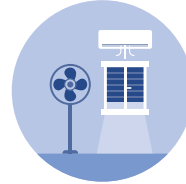
Use shades, draperies, awnings, or louvers on windows exposed to direct sunlight.



To protect vulnerable and older relatives, friends, and neighbours during a heatwave:



Ensure proper hydration by encouraging them to drink plenty of water and keeping it easily accessible.



Maintain cool environments by using air-conditioning and fans within their living spaces. Electric fans may offer relief from heat, but when temperatures exceed 35°C, they may not prevent heat-related illness.



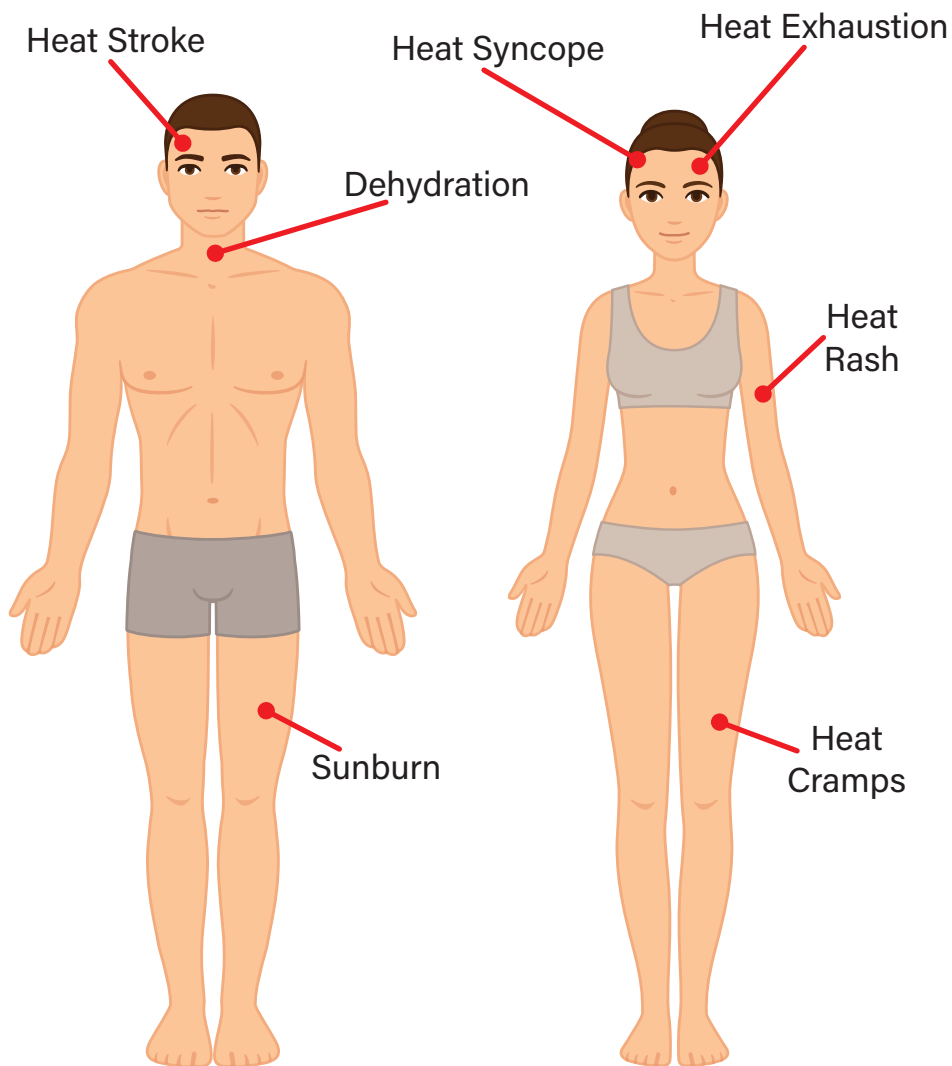
Stay in regular communication, especially if you do not live nearby, and check on their well-being daily.



Consider medication-related risks, as certain medications can increase sensitivity to heat. Consult healthcare providers for necessary precautions.



Heat-related illnesses





Heat-related illnesses

Understanding different heat-related illnesses can help you recognize and respond appropriately:

Heat Related Illness	Symptoms and Signs	Management
Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dark urine• Dizziness• Dry mouth• Fatigue• Increased heart rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink plenty of fluids ideally water regularly• Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables• Avoid alcohol, caffeinated and sugary drinks
Heat Syncope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fainting• Dizziness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sit or lie down in a cool shaded place• Slowly drink water, clear juice or sports drink• Clear juices and sports drinks are only recommended for heat syncope and not as a regular source of hydration
Heat Rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clusters of red bumps on skin• Often appears on neck, upper chest and skin folds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep your skin cool by wearing loose cotton clothing• Keep rash dry• Avoid dehydration• Apply a cold damp cloth or icepack to the rash for a few minutes to reduce itching• Consult with your pharmacist



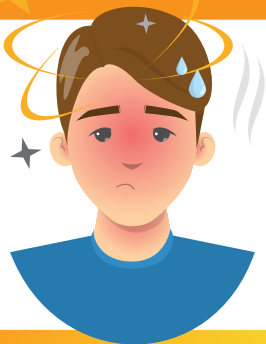
Heat Related Illness	Symptoms and Signs	Management
Sunburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Painful, red, and warm skin• Blisters on the skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay out of the sun until your sunburn heals• Put cool clothes on sunburned areas or take a cool bath• Put moisturizing lotion on sunburned areas• Do not break blisters
Heat Cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Muscle spasms or pain• Usually in legs, arms or abdomen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stop physical activity and move to a cool place• Drink water or a sports drink• Wait for cramps to go away before you do any more physical activity• Get medical help urgently if cramps last longer than 1 hour or you have underlying medical conditions



Heat Related Illness	Symptoms and Signs	Management
Heat Exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • Fatigue • Irritability • Thirst • Nausea or vomiting • Dizziness or light-headedness • Heavy sweating • Elevated body temperature • Fast heart rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to a cool place • Loosen your clothes • Put cool, wet clothes on your body or take a cool bath (not if dizzy or with altered level of consciousness) • Sip water. Any person with altered level of consciousness should not be given fluids to drink since this can lead to aspiration • Get medical help right away if you are throwing up, your symptoms get worse or your symptoms last more than 30 minutes
Heat Stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevated core body temperature $\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$ (104°F) • Confusion • Slurred Speech • Unconsciousness • Seizures • Heavy sweating or hot, dry skin • Rapid heart rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 112 immediately as heat stroke is a medical emergency • Move the person to a cooler place • Spray the person gently with cool water; sponge the person with cool water and use fan/air-conditioning. Ice packs wrapped in a towel in the armpit and/or groin are also helpful • Do not give the person anything to drink



HEAT EXHAUSTION



Dizziness, thirst,
heavy sweating,
nausea, weakness

ACT FAST

- ✓ Move to cooler areas
- ✓ Loosen clothing
- ✓ Sip cool water
- ✓ Seek medical help if symptoms do not improve
- ✓ For medical advice call 21 231 231



HEAT STROKE



High temperature,
confusion, dizziness,
becomes unconscious

ACT FAST



- ✓ Move person to a cooler area
- ✓ Loosen clothing and remove extra layers
- ✓ Cool with water or ice

Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.



Conclusion

Heatwaves are becoming more frequent and severe with climate change. By understanding who is at risk, recognising the signs of heat-related illnesses, and taking proactive measures, we can protect ourselves and our communities from the dangers of extreme heat. Remember, prevention is the best defence against heat-related illnesses.

Stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed. Enjoy your summer safely!

Notes

