



SOMERSET
County Council

Somerset's Public Health Update

12 July 2022

Temperatures are expected to remain in the mid-to-high twenties across much of Somerset this week and over the weekend, and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has issued a [Level 3 Heat Health Warning for the South West](#).

Whilst weather like this is something that many people look forward to, and go out and enjoy, it is worth remembering that sunny spells can pose health risks for some people. Those at risk may not recognise their own vulnerability to high temperatures.

We've put together this special edition of our Public Health newsletter to share some top tips for staying safe in the hot sunshine, and urge you to look out for those in our communities who may be more vulnerable to health risks in hot weather.



Cllr Adam Dance, Somerset County Council's Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity, shares some practical tips for looking after yourself and others during hot weather.

The main risks during hot weather are:

- Not drinking enough water ([dehydration](#))
- Overheating, which can make symptoms worse for people who already have problems with their heart or breathing
- [Heat exhaustion and heatstroke.](#)



Please look out for those most at risk

Professor Trudi Grant, Director of Public Health at Somerset County Council, is urging residents to look out for the most vulnerable in our communities as temperatures look set to soar this week.

"Somerset is a great place to be whatever the weather, and when the sun shines everyone is more likely to be enjoying the great outdoors."

"However, for some people, especially older people and those with existing health conditions, the summer heat can bring real health risks. That is why we're urging everyone to keep an eye on those you know who may be at risk this summer. If you are able, ask if your friends, family or neighbours need any support."

"It's vital we all follow the advice and adapt what we do when needed, so we don't put our local NHS services under any more pressure. Check weather forecasts, including UV forecasts, and if spending time outdoors remember to travel with bottled water and protect yourself from the sun during the hottest hours of the day, usually between 11am – 3pm."

Who is Vulnerable?

While everybody is at risk from the health consequences of heat, there are certain factors that increase an individual's risk during a heatwave. These include:

- older age: especially those over 75 years old, or those living on their own and who are socially isolated, or those living in a care home
- chronic and severe illness: including heart or lung conditions, diabetes, renal insufficiency, Parkinson's disease or severe mental illness

- inability to adapt behaviour to keep cool: babies and the very young, having a disability, being bed bound, having Alzheimer's disease
- environmental factors and overexposure: living in a top floor flat, being homeless, activities or jobs that are in hot places or outdoors and include high levels of physical exertion



Practical advice for keeping children cool

Children cannot control their body temperature as efficiently as adults during hot weather because they do not sweat as much and can therefore be at risk of ill-health from heat.

During periods of high temperature, the following steps should be taken:

- children should not take part in vigorous physical activity on very hot days, such as when temperatures are in excess of 30°C
- encourage children playing outdoors to stay in the shade as much as possible, consider the shade available for your sports days and outdoor play
- children should wear loose, light-coloured clothing to help keep cool and sunhats with wide brims to avoid sunburn
- regularly apply sunscreen (at least factor 15 with UVA protection) to protect skin if children are playing or taking lessons outdoors for more than 20 minutes
- provide children with plenty of water (such as water from a cold tap) and encourage them to drink more than usual, particularly if they are taking part in sports day events or outdoor play



Tips for beating the heat

Stay hydrated

- Stay hydrated – drink plenty of fluids and avoid excess alcohol
- If you need to travel, ensure you take water with you
- Keep drinks within easy reach

Stay safe in the sun

- Try to stay in the shade if you can and try to avoid direct sunlight between 11am-3pm
- Clothing can help, loose-fitting lightweight clothing like a T shirt can help reduce the sun's harmful rays, a hat and sunglasses are also a good choice
- If you have to be out on the sun, use a good quality sunscreen (at least SPF30) and apply it regularly.

Physical activity

- Avoid extreme physical exertion. Try to do any strenuous outdoor activity, such as sport, DIY or gardening, in the cooler parts of the day – in the early morning or evening.

Keeping the home cool

- Keeping your living space cool is especially important for those who need to stay at home because they are unwell or vulnerable
- Shade or cover windows exposed to direct sunlight and keep windows that are exposed to the sun closed during the day.
- If possible and safe, open windows at night if it feels cooler outside.
- Turn off non-essential lights and electrical equipment – they generate heat and cost money.
- During the hottest periods, try to find the coolest part of your home or garden/outside or local green space to sit in. If you're heading outdoors, please use cool spaces considerately.



Sunburn

- Try to keep out of the sun between 11am and 3pm, when UV radiation is strongest.
- If you have to go outside in the heat, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a wide-brimmed hat.

If travelling by car

- Ensure that babies, children, or older people are not left alone in parked cars, which can quickly overheat. Remember to take water with you.

Check on others

- Check on older people or sick neighbours, family or friends every day during hot weather to see if they need any help or support.



Enjoy the water safely

- During warm weather going for a swim can provide much welcomed relief.
- Take care and follow local safety advice if you are going into the water to cool down.
- If you get into trouble in the water, [the RNLI urge you to remember 'Float to Live'](#)- resist the urge to thrash about, instead lean back, extend your arms and legs and

gently move them around to stay afloat, once you can control your breathing, call for help or swim to safety.

Look out for the signs of heat-related harm

- If you feel dizzy, weak or have intense thirst and a headache, move to a cool place as soon as possible. Drink some water or diluted fruit juice to rehydrate. Avoid excess alcohol.
- If you have painful muscular spasms (particularly in the legs, arms, or abdomen), rest immediately in a cool place and drink electrolyte drinks. Most people should start to recover within 30 mins and if not, you should seek medical help. Call 111 if you feel unusual symptoms, or if symptoms persist.
- Call 999 if a person develops any signs of heatstroke as this is a medical emergency. Further information on heatstroke and heat-related illness are available [here](#).



UK Health Security Agency

Keeping cool in hot weather

If you or others feel unwell, get dizzy, weak or have intense thirst **move to a cool place, rehydrate and cool your body down.**

Want to take control of your own health and well-being?

A good first stop when looking for support for yourself, the people you know or your community is our website www.somerset.gov.uk

It's never too late to take control of your health and well-being through changing behaviours and seeking help and we're with you every step of the way.

Follow our Director of Public Health, Professor Trudi Grant, on [Twitter](#) and stay in the know.



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