

Home Care / CHSP Service

Caring for Older People in Warmer Weather

High temperatures are often experienced across Australia every summer and you must be alert to the possibility of heatwaves.

Service providers need to be particularly aware of the severe hazards associated with extreme heat events. Older people living in the community may suffer from heat stress and those who live alone without regular contact from others may be particularly at risk.

Heatwave checklist

To assist the comfort of care recipients, and for you to meet your responsibilities under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, particularly Standard 2 (Appropriate Access and Service Delivery) of the Home Care Standards, the department has created a checklist which may be useful in considering the activities you may need to undertake during a heatwave.

Clinical assessment

A clinical assessment will be required if a care recipient shows any signs of deterioration. The effects of heat-related illnesses can range from mild conditions such as a rash or cramps to very serious conditions such as severe confusion or heat stroke. If you are concerned about a care recipient's wellbeing, their general practitioner should be contacted immediately.

Further information

Further information is available from state and territory health department websites.

Checklist

Before a heatwave

- assess which care recipients are at risk - who has limited capacity to keep cool; or which homes are prone to being hot
- check cooling systems in care recipients' homes are adequate and working effectively
- ask relatives and friends to ensure care recipients are cool and comfortable and appropriately dressed on hot days
- offer extra support to care recipients where family and friends are not available to help
- provide contact details of your care recipients to the local emergency services, where appropriate.

During a heatwave

- continue to deliver care - source additional staff or volunteers if required
- be aware care recipients may be at particular risk following high overnight temperatures
- keep curtains and blinds closed in care recipients homes to reduce excess heat
- make small amounts of fluids readily available to care recipients
- provide alternative forms of fluid, and discourage alcoholic or caffeinated beverages
- encourage care recipients to eat frequent small meals
- encourage care recipients to wear loose fitting clothing, use sunscreen and keep skin covered when exposed to direct sunlight
- encourage care recipients to seek shade when outside, and to avoid going out between 11 am and 3 pm
- offer additional tepid showers or sponging
- look for signs of heat stress, such as nausea, and changes in appearance including red, pale or severely dry skin
- ask for a clinical assessment if care recipients show any signs of deterioration.