

What to do in hot weather

ECHO hope that you are all planning to enjoy the upcoming summer weather but we thought it might help to share some tips and advice that we have put together. Some is general and some specific to children with heart conditions.

Taking care in hot weather

- Give extra fluids throughout the hot period (water or juice – NOT fizzy, sweet or soft drinks). This also applies to young babies who are either bottle or breast-fed – they should be given extra, sterilised water. It is very important cardiac children do not become dehydrated.
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day (11 am to 2 pm)
- Use high factor sunscreen at all times (30, 40 or 50 SPF) and remember that babies and young children shouldn't be exposed to very strong sunlight at any time without this.
- Take extra care of scars and apply SPF 50 to those areas, particularly if they are new scars or wounds.
- Use hats which provide shade for the forehead, eyes and back of the neck.
- If your baby or child develops a fever, becomes extra lethargic (bearing in mind this weather slows everyone down!) or starts refusing feeds, please contact your GP.

Keeping babies and children safe

- Babies have fewer sweat glands than adults so their temperature regulating systems aren't fully developed, making them more susceptible to hyperthermia.
- If not recognised quickly this can very quickly escalate into life-threatening heat exhaustion.
- Because babies can't communicate the problem, watch for a dry mouth or tongue, fewer tears when crying, drier than usual nappies, high fever, and listlessness.
- Make sure your baby takes on extra fluids – and if you're breast-feeding that means you should too.
- Seek out air-conditioning, cover your baby in light-weight clothing and slather them in SPF50 sun cream – babies are especially susceptible to sunburn.
- All young skin is delicate and very easily damaged by the sun, so children should use at least a factor 15 sunscreen and choose a broad-spectrum brand that has a four or five-star rating.
- Choose sunscreens that are formulated for children and babies, as these are less likely to irritate their skin.
- And remember that sunburn in babies puts them at increased risk of skin cancer, even in childhood. And, like adults, remember to reapply every two hours if you're out in the sun.

Keep fluids up

- Check if you're dehydrated when you go to the loo – your urine should run clear, not be a dark yellow.

- Including fluids from foods, women should aim to drink 2.5 litres a day, men 3.5 litres. Children aged two to three are recommended to consume 1.3 litres a day, rising as they grow.
- Keep drinking: Make sure you keep your fluids up in the hot weather.
- Even mild dehydration can hamper the body's sweat system, raising your core temperature, making your heart work harder to keep you cool, so drink water before bedtime too.
- But avoid alcohol which undoes many of the human body's healthy reflexes, including keeping the core body temperature cool in warm weather.
- And because alcohol is a diuretic, you'll be expelling more fluid than your body needs.
- Also, avoid drinks high in caffeine such as coffee and colas, which increase the metabolic heat in the body.

Keeping the air cool

- Put a wet towel on an airier with a fan behind it
- Ditch your duvet and sleep under a sheet instead. Even better, put your sheets in a plastic bag and stick them in the fridge a couple of hours before going to bed. As we fall asleep our body temperature lowers, which is why it's difficult to sleep in hot weather. Cold sheets straight from the fridge or a fan should help you sleep better.
- Freeze a couple of water bottles and place them in front of a floor or desk fan, and you'll enjoy a much cooler breeze.
- If you haven't got any bottles of frozen water, put some ice cubes into a bowl in front of the fan.
- Cool down a whole room by hanging a wet sheet in front of an open window.
- The breeze blowing in will quickly bring down the room's temperature.

Cool your pulse points - Exercise but be sensible

- To chill out super-fast, apply ice packs or cold compresses to pulse points at the wrists, neck, elbows, groin, ankles and behind the knees.
- If you've been doing any exercise - or simply walking in the sun - and don't have a cold compress to hand, run your wrists under cold running water for a few minutes for a similar effect.
- Look up the signs of [heatstroke](#) - if in doubt call your GP or 999.
- Heatwave? Read more about coping in [extreme hot weather](#).