




Welcome to the December issue of BeWell news!

In this edition we explore how to be safe in summer and share tips on staying cool in the heat.

This summer we expect the weather to be hot and dry in Melbourne. We expect temperatures to reach over 35 degrees for a number of days, as well as high temperatures overnight. While we want you to enjoy the summer and your independence wherever possible, we also want everyone to be prepared and to plan for the hot weather.

You can stock up on supplies and avoid making appointments or going out on extreme days.

You can have a plan on what to do the night before and in the morning. You can also check-in with family and friends, and take care of your pets. Read on for more tips and for how to make those hot days more manageable.

This is also our final issue before Christmas and the New Year. During the festive season, we hope you reach out to family and/or friends and enjoy the holiday season.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

IN THIS EDITION

- How to stay safe in extreme heat
- A reminder about care worker visits
- Sustainable and accessible ways to keep cool
- Know your heatwave categories
- How to keep your home cool – on a budget
- Social news
- Active Monash
- LGBTQIA+ rainbow connection
- Ask the OT: Staying independent at home
- Council's no gift policy
- Fire safety tips for the home
- Recommended cleaning products

Feedback on 9518 3553

communitysupport@monash.vic.gov.au

Next edition: April 2024

Public Holidays 2023

- Christmas Day: Monday 25 December
- Boxing Day: Tuesday 26 December

Public Holidays 2024

- New Year's Day: Monday 1 January
- Australia Day: Friday 26 January
- Labour Day: Monday 11 March
- Good Friday: 29 March
- Easter Monday: 1 April



HOW TO STAY SAFE IN EXTREME HEAT

As we move into summer, we're likely to experience periods of extreme heat or heatwaves.

Extreme heat can affect people's health, increasing the risk of heat stroke. It can also affect community infrastructure (such as power supply and public transport) and other services.

Here is some information from the State Government's Department of Health on how to keep cool and hydrated and prepare for extreme heat.



COPING WITH THE HEAT

- ✓ **Drink plenty of water**, even if you don't feel thirsty (if your doctor normally limits your fluids, check how much to drink during hot weather).
- ✓ **Keep yourself cool** by using wet towels, putting your feet in cool water and taking cool (not cold) showers.
- ✓ **Spend as much time** as possible in cool or air-conditioned areas and avoid outings.
- ✓ **Block out the sun at home** during the day by closing curtains and blinds.
- ✓ **Open the windows** when there is a cool breeze.
- ✓ **Stay out of the sun** during the hottest part of the day.
- ✓ **Cancel or postpone outings**. If you absolutely must go out, stay in the shade and take plenty of water with you.
- ✓ **Wear a hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing** made from natural fibres like cotton and linen.
- ✓ **Eat smaller meals** more often and cold meals such as salads.
- ✓ **Make sure food** that needs refrigeration is properly stored.
- ✓ **Avoid heavy activity** like sport, renovating and gardening.
- ✓ **Watch or listen to news reports** to find out more information during extreme heat.



HOW TO STAY SAFE IN EXTREME HEAT (CONT'D)

HOW YOU CAN HELP OTHERS

- ✓ Keep in touch with sick or frail friends and family. Call them at least once on any extreme heat day.
- ✓ Encourage them to drink plenty of water.
- ✓ If you observe symptoms of heat-related illness, seek medical help.



PREPARE FOR EXTREME HEAT

- ✓ Stock up on food, water and medicines so you don't have to go out in the heat.
- ✓ Visit your doctor to check if changes are needed to your medicines during extreme heat.
- ✓ Store medicines safely at the recommended temperature.
- ✓ Check that your fan or air-conditioner works well. Have your air-conditioner serviced if necessary.
- ✓ Look at the things you can do to make your home cooler such as installing window coverings, shade cloths or external blinds on the sides of the house facing the sun.



PREPARE FOR A POWER FAILURE

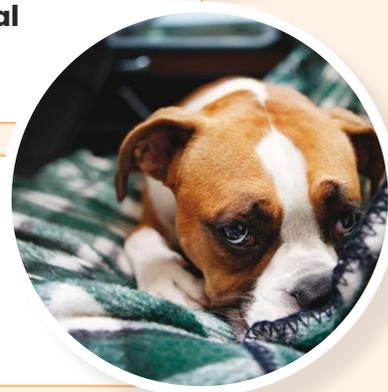
- ✓ Ensure you have a torch, fully charged mobile phone, a battery-operated radio and some spare batteries.
- ✓ Stock up on food items that do not require refrigeration or cooking such as tinned fruit and vegetables, tinned meats or fish, bread and fruit.
- ✓ Have plenty of drinking water available.
- ✓ Stock up on medications and other essential items.
- ✓ Consider a battery-operated or hand-held fan to assist with cooling.



HOW TO STAY SAFE IN EXTREME HEAT (CONT'D)

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

- During extreme heat it is easy to become dehydrated or for your body to overheat. If this happens, you may develop heat cramps, heat exhaustion or even heatstroke.
- Heatstroke is a medical emergency which can result in permanent damage to your vital organs, or even death, if not treated immediately. Extreme heat can also make existing medical conditions worse.
- **If you observe any symptoms of heat related illness, seek medical assistance or contact Nurse on Call on ☎ 1300 606 024**



HOT CARS KILL

- Never leave children, adults or pets in hot cars. The temperature inside parked cars can double within minutes.

Source: Victorian Government Department of Health, Survive the Heat brochure, 2023.

For more information and translated materials on how to stay safe in extreme heat, visit www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/resources/survive-the-heat-brochure

A REMINDER ABOUT CARE WORKER VISITS



When our staff mop floors in your home, this can present a slip hazard. It is important to be aware of where we are mopping and when these floors are ready to be walked on.

One way to help your floors dry quicker is to open doors for air or use heating in winter.

If you need to access your kitchen or bathroom areas, please chat with the care worker and use these areas before mopping is undertaken.

Your home is your sanctuary. We understand it can be difficult to have new people at your property. Our staff are respectful and caring. To protect everyone from any awkward situations, we suggest if you have any valuables, to put these away before people come to your home. There is nothing worse than thinking something has gone missing, and to then realise it has been misplaced.

SUSTAINABLE AND ACCESSIBLE WAYS TO KEEP COOL

Mitigating climate change is vital, but inevitable rising temperatures means that identifying sustainable cooling strategies is also important. Strategies at the individual scale that focus on cooling the person instead of the surrounding air can be effectively adopted, even in low-resource settings.

Electric fans



- ⊕ Can provide effective cooling for young healthy adults up to 42°C in 50% humidity
- ⊖ Effectiveness is reduced with low humidity, and in older adults (>65 years), unless accompanied by self-dousing
- ⊖ Increases dehydration, but can be offset by drinking an extra glass of water per hour

Self-dousing



- ⊕ Can reduce heat strain and dehydration up to 47°C if dousing is sufficient to keep the skin wet
- ⊕ Can be used during power outages
- ⊖ Low compatibility with high clothing coverage



Electric fans can be used below these temperatures irrespective of humidity:

39°C

Healthy young adults (aged 18 to 40 years)

38°C

Healthy adults (aged over 65)

37°C

Over 65s taking anti-cholinergic medication

Foot immersion*



- ⊕ Can reduce dehydration and thermal discomfort in hot and humid conditions
- ⊕ Can be used during power outages
- ⊖ Risk of slips and falls

*feet immersed above the ankles in 20°C water

Wet clothing



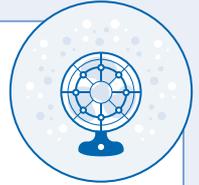
- ⊕ Provides high evaporative heat loss without needing to sweat
- ⊕ Can be used during power outages
- ⊖ Clothing must be re-soaked roughly every 60 minutes

Evaporative coolers



- ⊕ Can cool air temperatures in dry conditions
- ⊖ Minimal effect in high humidity
- ⊖ Risks creating mosquito breeding sites without proper maintenance

Misty fans



- ⊕ Lower air temperatures in hot and dry seasons
- ⊖ Must be used in well-ventilated or outdoor areas otherwise humidity increases offset any benefit
- ⊖ Risk of slips and falls

Ice towels*



- ⊕ Can reduce core temperature and cardiovascular strain in conditions up to 45°C
- ⊖ Requires access to ice
- ⊖ Labour-intensive to prepare

*crushed ice wrapped in a damp towel applied to the neck and chest

Cold water ingestion



- ⊕ Can provide internal cooling
- ⊕ Water should be ingested at a temperature that is most palatable (~10°C) to ensure optimal hydration
- ⊖ If a person has already started sweating, not effective at lowering core temperature

KNOW YOUR HEATWAVE CATEGORIES

The Bureau of Meteorology (Bureau) issues heatwave warnings when an area is expected to have 3 days of unusually high temperatures.

The Bureau use three heatwave categories based on severity:

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Low-intensity | Severe | Extreme |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|

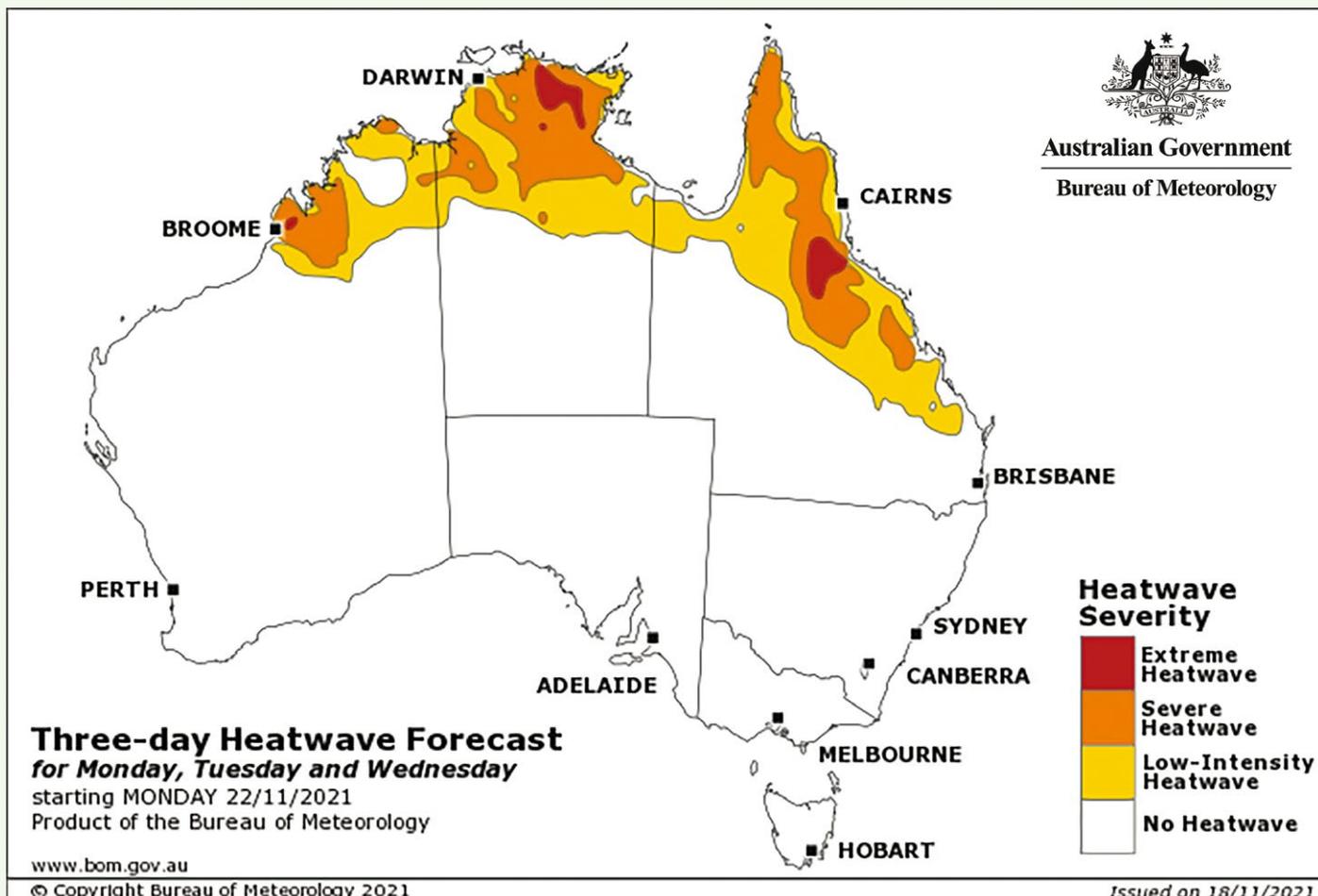
According to the Bureau, under different categories, different groups are at risk:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Low-intensity heatwaves: most people can cope.</p> | <p>Severe heatwaves: vulnerable people at risk.</p> | <p>Extreme heatwaves: everyone is at risk, even people who are healthy.</p> |
|--|--|--|

No matter which category has been issued, we encourage you to keep cool and hydrated and follow the tips in this newsletter to ensure you stay safe in the heat.

To get heat warnings, visit the Bureau of Meteorology website, use the Bureau of Meteorology app  www.bom.gov.au/app or ring their telephone service  1300 978 022.

Example of a heatwave forecast map.



HOW TO KEEP YOUR HOME COOL – ON A BUDGET

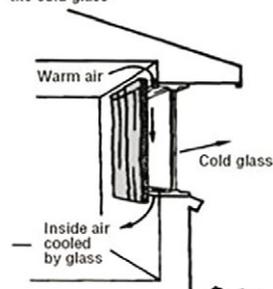
It can be very expensive and complex to retrofit your existing home with double glazed windows and energy efficient air conditioning to combat the hot summer.

Here are some simple things you can do to make your home cooler during hot days.

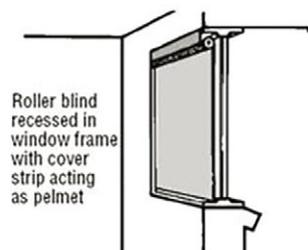
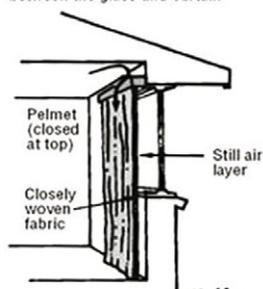
- ✓ Close the blinds, especially on the north and west sides of your home. Ideally try to shield your windows from the sun entirely.
- ✓ When you know it will be a hot day, close all the blinds and curtains early in the day.
- ✓ If you have the means, installing external blinds and awnings can be more effective than curtains or blinds, or plant trees to shade the windows. If this isn't possible, temporary shade cloth structures or reflective window films can also help reduce heat.
- ✓ Ensure the curtains or window coverings cover the entire window, down to the ground, with a pelmet at the top to keep the hot air out of the room. See image  <https://ajmcustomdesigns.weebly.com/pelmets.html>
- ✓ When it is cooler outside, let cooler air into the home by opening opposite windows and doors.
- ✓ Check the sealing around windows, doors and skirting boards for any gaps or leaks that let heat into your home. Use gap-filler and door snakes to plug the gaps.
- ✓ Find a fan – either ceiling or portable. Fans will cool you down and cost less to run.
- ✓ Place your fan in front of a bowl of ice cubes to mimic a cooling breeze.
- ✓ If you do have air conditioning, create a cool room by just cooling that room and closing the doors to the rest of house.



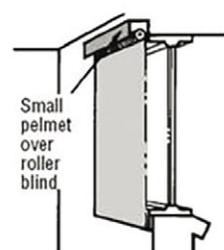
Poorly fitted curtain: allows warm air to contact the cold glass



Well fitted curtain with closed pelmet: creates a still air space between the glass and curtain



Roller blind recessed in window frame with cover strip acting as pelmet



Small pelmet over roller blind

SOCIAL NEWS

The Council-run social inclusion programs at Halcyon Positive Ageing Activity Centre in Glen Waverley and Oakleigh Positive Ageing Activity Centre will be closed from Friday 22 December 2023 and reopening on Monday 15 January 2024.

While the social inclusion programs are unavailable, there are still plenty of ways to stay connected in the community.

ACTIVE MONASH

Active Monash has a range of aquatics and fitness facilities. If you register online, first-time users can access a seven-day fitness pass.

Clayton Aquatics and Health Club

9-15 Cooke Street, Clayton

Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre

626 Waverley Road, Glen Waverley

Oakleigh Recreation Centre

2A Park Road, Oakleigh

☎ 9265 4888

✉ activemonash@monash.vic.gov.au



For more information  www.activemonash.vic.gov.au

LGBTQIA+ RAINBOW CONNECTION

This is a regular monthly LGBTQIA+ and friends social group, which is dedicated to bringing the over 40s and fabulous together for some fun and enjoyable company. Everyone is welcome!

Where

Power Neighbourhood House, 54 Power Avenue, Ashwood

When

Monthly meet-up. Check the website for latest dates

Cost

FREE. Please bring a plate to share with others

Contact:

☎ 8849 9707

✉ office@powernh.org.au



Bookings and more information:  www.trybooking.com/CJAFP

STAYING INDEPENDENT AT HOME

Who are occupational therapists and what do they do in the community?

When an older person is affected by an illness or injury, an occupational therapist can help them on the road to recovery. They may assist with the development of new skills for daily living, such as household tasks, personal care or leisure programs. They may also make or facilitate changes to the home environment to make your life easier and safer.

What are some tips on maintaining my independence at home?

To stay independent, we need to identify and prepare for potential risks and obstacles.¹ By looking at ways to prevent risks and seeking early intervention for mobility issues, you can maintain your independence. This includes being aware of any changes in how you engage in day-to-day activities. To maintain independence, engage in hobbies, address and manage cognitive changes and seek assistance when necessary.

Some of the daily things you can consider include:

REDUCING POTENTIAL RISKS FOR FALLS AND TRIPS

- Remove loose mats or rugs where possible.
- Increase lighting in walkways, corridors and access areas, especially steps (consider automated sensor lighting or night lights).
- Clear clutter from walkways and access ways.
- Address uneven surfaces or terrains.
- Be aware of your own physical limitations or restrictions. Consider seeing a physiotherapist for a mobility assessment and mobility aid prescription if needed.



MAINTAINING PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE HEALTH

- Maintain physical activity such as regular walks. Join a walking group or exercise group if able.
- Physical activities can also include incidental activity such as checking the mailbox, having meals at the dining table, watering plants, light housework, or getting up to make a cup of tea.
- Use memory aids such as a diary or a calendar for appointments and make it a habit to write in it and check it regularly.
- Make shopping lists regularly.
- Boost cognitive function by engaging socially (coffee dates with a friend) or keeping up to date with news items.
- See your doctor if you notice any changes in your memory or thinking that affects the way you manage your daily tasks.
- Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks.



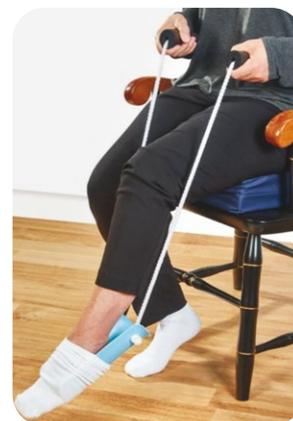
1. Bimou et al. BMC Geriatrics (2021) 21: 142 "Patterns and predictive factors of loss of the independence trajectory among community-dwelling older adults."

STAYING INDEPENDENT AT HOME (CONT'D)

AIDS AND EQUIPMENT

To maintain your independence, you can use a range of small aids and equipment. Many of these are readily available at equipment suppliers or pharmacists.

- **If you have difficulty standing for long periods:** perching stools in the kitchen let you to work at the kitchen bench or wash dishes while seated. Shower stools allow you to sit for tasks such as showering, drying and dressing, increasing your stability.
- **If you have difficulty managing cleaning:** robotic vacuum cleaners are great for uncluttered open spaces. Lightweight stick vacuums are easy to manoeuvre and have enough charge to vacuum a room at a time. If you have difficulty bending, long-handled cleaning sponges and pick-up sticks are useful to clean hard to reach places or skirting boards.
- **If you have difficulty with dressing or showering:** shower stools and shower chairs come in all sizes to fit standard and larger showers. They can improve your base of support and balance while showering sitting down, so you are less likely to fall. There are also dressing aids such as button hooks, sock donning aids and a range of long-handled aids to assist if you can't bend down.
- **If you have difficulty managing meal preparation:** kitchen aids such as finger guards protect your fingers while using a knife, and jar openers and built up cutlery can make it easier to cook on your own. Peelers and utensils with larger handles are easier to grasp.



Maintaining independence is about adapting to changes and putting things in place that let you keep doing what you are doing. As you can see, you can make small changes to how you do things, such as sitting to prepare your meals, using some handy aids or going for walks with a friend.

- Marilyn Lee, Occupational Therapist.

If you need more support and want further advice, see your GP or contact My Aged Care on ☎ 1800 200 422.

COUNCIL'S NO GIFT POLICY

Just a reminder with the approach of the holiday season and clients wanting to give care workers a gift, Monash staff are not permitted to receive any gifts or money from anyone. A simple thank you is welcomed.

We understand you are grateful for the care worker and the support they offer you and that you want to show your appreciation. Instead of a gift you could write a letter, email or send a feedback card. This appreciation will go on the care worker's employee record, and they will be acknowledged by Monash Council. Each year we recognise exceptional customer service for staff and departments.

FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOME



My tumble dryer is on so much more this time of year! I find the quickest way to clean the filter is simply using my dustpan brush! It's so quick and easy Works every time! 😊

- **Ensure there is a smoke detector in every bedroom.** Use a 10-year battery sealed unit. Label the outside with the date so it is visible from the ground and you know when to replace it.
- If you have an electric clothes dryer, remember to clean the lint filter.
- In the kitchen, keep clutter at least 1 metre away from the stove. Ensure the range hood fan is cleaned regularly.



RECOMMENDED CLEANING PRODUCTS

Recently we sent out an updated product listing for clients. We know this can be frustrating when recommended products change and wanted to explain this process.

Working under Occupational Health and Safety legislation, we need to keep our staff safe. Part of this means having safe systems of work practice. We check the composition of products our staff use by looking at the Safety Data Sheets. These are provided by manufacturers and have a safety rating. Community support chooses products that are 'Not hazardous'. A product can be classified as hazardous due to various reasons, such as being labelled 'flammable' or being a skin/eye irritant.

A product's rating can change due to changes in the product composition or changes to the rating criteria used by WorkSafe. As our staff use products at most homes they work in, they are exposed more regularly to these chemicals. Using a product once may not be harmful to their health, but using them at 10 to 15 homes each week may not be healthy.

We suggest using up your current products, and ask that you replace them with the ones on the updated list. There are also non-chemical alternatives that can be used.



LANGUAGE ASSIST

普通话 4713 5001
 廣東話 4713 5002
 Việt Ngữ 4713 5003

Ελληνικά 4713 5004
 हिंदी 4713 5005
 Italiano 4713 5008

한국어 4713 5010
 සිංහල 4713 5020

தமிழ் 4713 5021
 Other 4713 5000
 languages