



Queensland Health

Extreme heat and Heatwaves

Stakeholder toolkit 2023 – 24



Queensland
Government

Contents

Introduction	3
The risk of heat and heatwaves on health in Queensland	3
What is a heatwave?	4
Key messages	4
Understanding heatwaves	4
Recognise and act	4
Protecting vulnerable groups	4
Preparing for heatwaves	4
Collective effort	5
Call to action	5
Target audience	5
Summary of our target audience	5
What is important to them	5
Communication materials (social media, short-form content, digital screen and fact sheets)	6
Social media assets	6
Preparing for extreme heat / heatwaves	7
During a heatwave	11
Short-form content	15
Queensland prepares for an intense summer	15
Impending heatwave event	16
Heatwave warning – stay safe and informed	16
Mini campaign series	17
Screensaver/digital screens	17
Factsheet and preparation checklists	18
Other resources	19
More information	19
Cancer Council Queensland	19
Cancer Council Australia	19
Contact us	19

Introduction

This stakeholder kit has been developed to assist in communicating important information about the risk heat can have on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.

If you would like to share heat-related messaging through your own communication channels, this kit may assist.

It includes key messages and communication materials designed to be adapted for use throughout the hottest months of the year, or in the lead up to and during a heatwave event.

Queensland Health (QH) is the primary agency for managing heatwaves under the State Disaster Management Plan and outside of proactive heat-related messaging are responsible for issuing warnings if an extreme heatwave occurs. This process is internal to QH, and not outlined in this kit.

The risk of heat and heatwaves on health in Queensland

Heatwaves have taken more lives and caused more adverse health outcomes than any other natural hazard in Australia.

In September 2023, the Bureau of Meteorology announced that Australia will be moving into an El Niño phase. During El Niño, we often experience warmer-than-average daytime temperatures over large areas of Australia.

This warmer weather can contribute to droughts, bushfires, extreme heat, and heatwaves.

In 2023–24, it is predicted that Queensland will experience above average heatwave levels (similar to 2018–19).

A study conducted by James Cook University found:

- emergency ambulance calls increased by over 10% during heatwaves compared to regular days
- heatwaves led to a 5% rise in deaths, varying across Queensland
- very remote areas faced more risk from low to severe heatwaves
- major cities saw the highest danger from extreme heatwaves
- the spike in emergency ambulance calls persisted for up to 10 days after a heatwave, suggesting the days following might still be hot (not classified as a heatwave, but still have a compounding impact on health)
- residents located in metropolitan areas in Queensland had a higher death risk during all heatwave levels
- people with respiratory, mental, and behavioural conditions were more affected by heatwaves.

What is a heatwave?

The Bureau of Meteorology defines a heatwave as three or more days of high maximum and minimum temperatures that are unusual for that location.

Heatwaves are identified as the third highest priority natural hazard, and the deadliest, claiming more lives than any other natural hazard. They are also a contributing factor to bushfires, a fatal hazard that also causes secondary health hazards associated with poor air and water quality.

Key messages

Understanding heatwaves

- Heatwaves in Australia have caused more deaths and adverse health outcomes than any other natural hazard.
- With the upcoming El Niño in 2023, Queensland is predicted to experience extreme heatwaves.
- Research shows that emergency services and health departments observe significant increases in emergencies during and up to 10 days after heatwaves.

Recognise and act

- Symptoms of dehydration and heatstroke include dizziness, headaches, nausea, rapid pulse, confusion, and even loss of consciousness.
- If experiencing heat-related symptoms, it's vital to act immediately. Seek shade, hydrate, cool off, and avoid sugary or alcoholic beverages.

Protecting vulnerable groups

- Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and those with certain medical conditions or on certain medications need special attention during hot weather.
- Physical workers and athletes need to be extra cautious and ensure they're well-hydrated during heatwaves.

Preparing for heatwaves

- To stay healthy during a heatwave, hydrate, reduce outdoor activity, and keep indoors, ideally in air-conditioned spaces.
- If you don't have air-conditioning, consider visiting public spaces like libraries or shopping centres.
- Check on vulnerable neighbours and family members regularly.
- Plan in case of power outages. Store essential medicines out of the heat.

Collective effort

- As Queenslanders, we must understand that heat warnings apply to all of us, not just the 'vulnerable' in our communities.
By recognising the dangers, symptoms, and precautions associated with heatwaves, we can collectively ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

Call to action

Call to action on any heatwave message opportunity:

For more information visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe

If you or anyone else show signs of heatstroke call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice or visit your doctor. If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000).

Target audience

Summary of our target audience

- **All Queenslanders** who may be impacted by a heatwave and/or who care for children or vulnerable people.
- **Vulnerable people** including the elderly, babies and very young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, people with medical conditions or taking certain medications, people with an alcohol and or other drug problem, and people with an intellectual disability.
- **Queenslanders who are at risk of heat exposure** including those who work in agriculture, construction, landscaping, delivery services, oil and gas operations, and those who are working in hot conditions outdoors, or indoors without access to air conditioning.

What is important to them

- **Relevance:** Messages should align with public perceptions and lived experiences.
- **Acknowledgment of vulnerabilities:** Recognising different risk levels based on available resources and vulnerabilities is essential.
- **Advice:** They are looking for health advice and recommended actions, not repetitive information.
- **Clear, unfiltered information:** The audience wants direct communication that isn't distorted or sensationalised by media outlets.

Communication materials (social media, short-form content, digital screen and fact sheets)

Communication materials are available for download from the [Queensland Health Asset Library](#) to support communication activities and help you share this important information through your own communication channels.

Social media assets

A selection of copy and images that relates to how to prepare for a heatwave, and what to do during a heatwave are available for you to download from the [Queensland Asset Library](#) to use on your own channels.

You can adapt the copy to suit your needs and audience.

Preparing for extreme heat / heatwaves

Post 1: Heat warnings aren't just for the vulnerable

We all need to be careful during a heatwave.

When it's very hot, your body tries to cool down by sweating.

Sometimes sweating isn't enough to cool you down.

This can make you feel sick, with symptoms like feeling dizzy, having a headache, feeling nauseous, wanting to drink water, or even vomiting.

Heat-related illness can be dangerous, and in some cases, deadly.

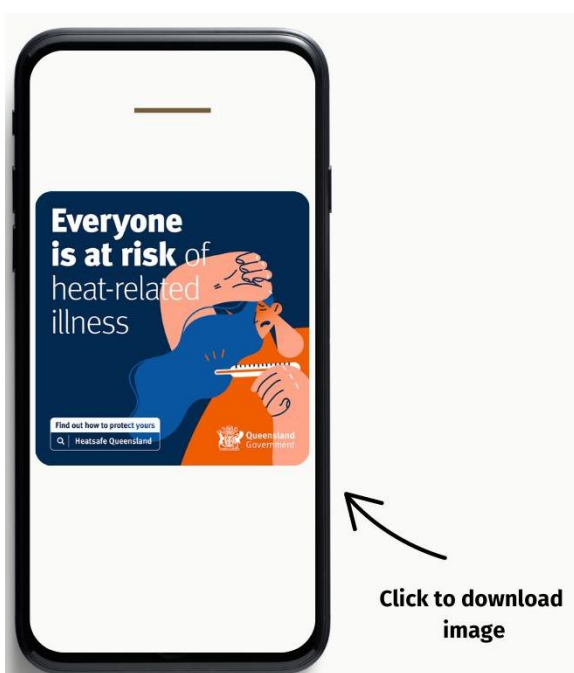
Here's how to keep you and your family safe:

- 💧 drink water often (between 6-8 glasses each day)
- 📞 check in on loved ones regularly (especially older adults and pregnant women)
- 🏃 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day
- ❄️ keep cool in air conditioning or find a shaded or cool spot to rest.
- 🕶️ be sun safe by wearing a hat and sunglasses, keeping out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, wearing long sleeve and light clothing, and applying sunscreen every two hours.

If you, or someone you know, start feeling unwell due to the heat:

- Get medical advice by calling 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit your doctor.
- In emergencies, don't wait, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe



Post 2: Signs of heat-related illness

Feeling unwell in the heat?

If you, or someone you know feels sweaty, nauseous, dizzy, has a fast heartbeat, or seems confused, these may be signs of heat stress or heatstroke.

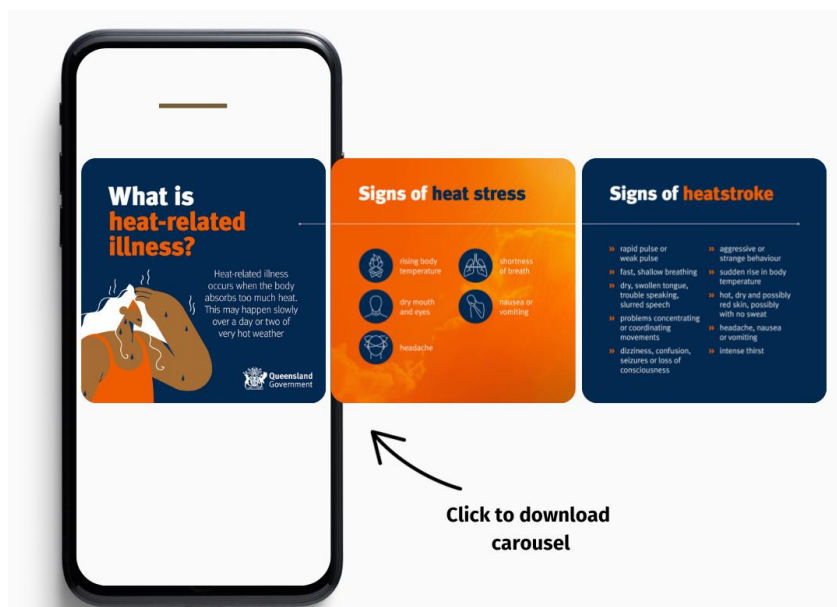
When your body loses too much water and salt – often from sweating a lot – it’s called heat stress.

A more severe condition is heatstroke. This happens when your body can’t keep themselves cool. It’s very serious and you need medical attention straight away.

If you have these signs or know someone who does:

- Find a cool, shaded place
- Drink water – avoid drinks with sugar or alcohol
- Cool the body with a shower or bath
- Lay down and rest
- Wear less clothes
- Use wet towels to cool down
- If you don’t get better, get medical advice by calling 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visiting your doctor.
- In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe



Post 3: Everyone is at risk of heat-related illness

Staying safe in hot weather is important for everyone – even you.

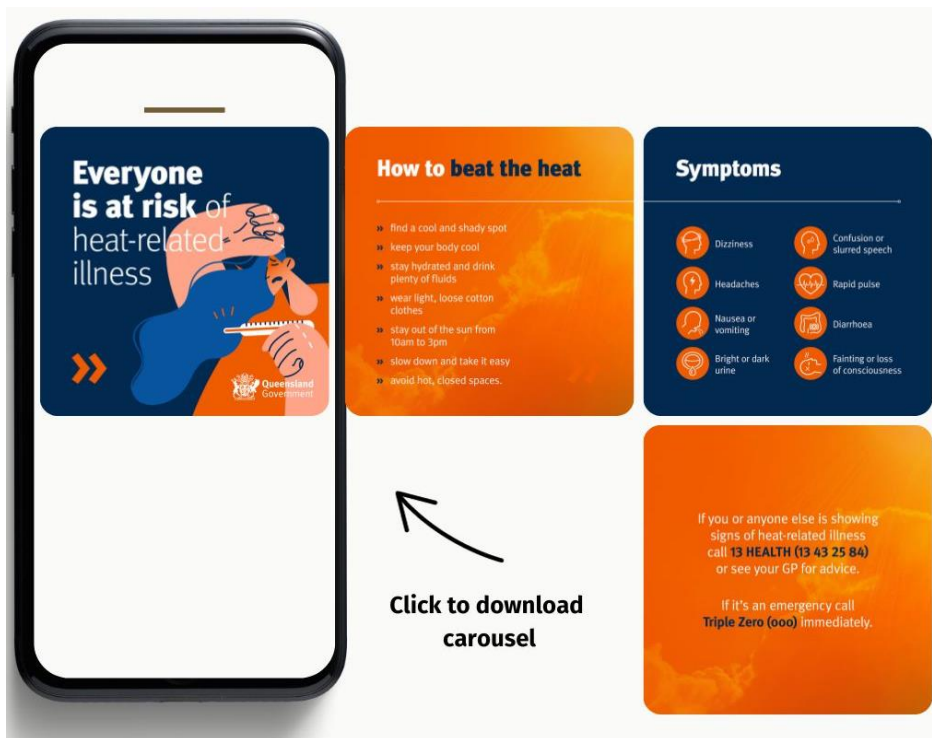
Hot weather can be hard on your body. When it gets very hot, your body tries to cool down by sweating. But sometimes, sweating isn't enough to keep us cool.

We might start to feel unwell with a heat-related illness.

Heat-related illness can be dangerous, or even deadly.

If you, or someone around you, starts to feel unwell from the heat, here's how to beat the heat ↓.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.



Post 4: Vulnerable people during a heatwave

Heatwaves are a danger to everyone.
But, some people are more at risk of heat-related illness.

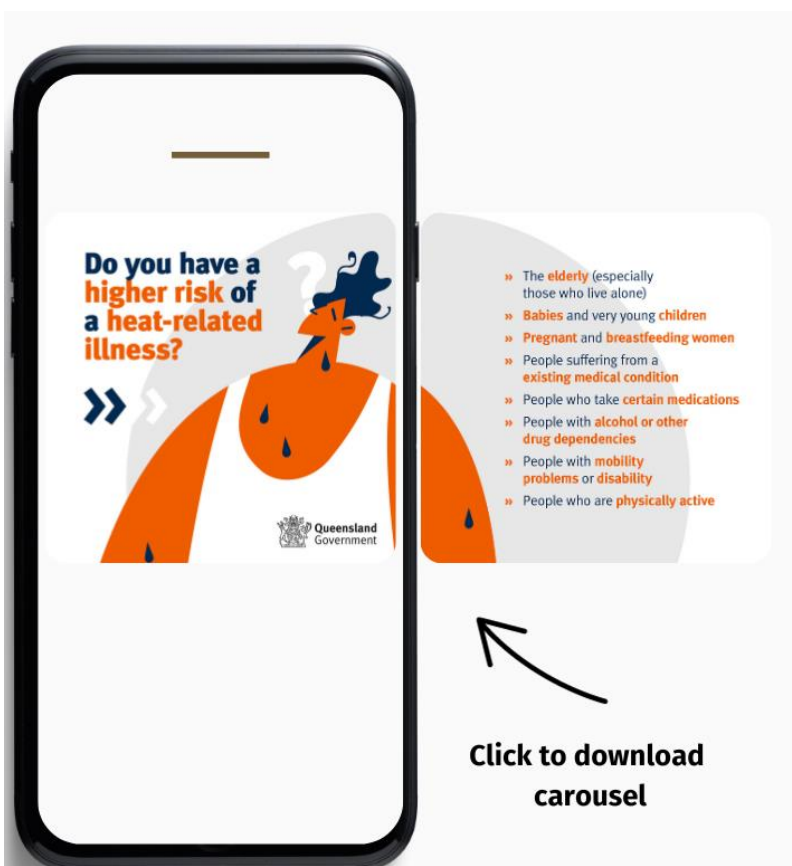
If you have friends, neighbours or family members who are in danger during a heatwave, remind them to:

- 💧 drink water (between 6-8 glasses each day)
- 🏃 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day
- 🧊 find a cool place, use fans, or air conditioning
- 😎 be sun safe. Wearing a hat and sunglasses, stay out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, wear long sleeves and light clothing and apply sunscreen every two hours.

If someone you know starts to feel unwell from the heat, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit your doctor.

In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.



During a heatwave


Post 1: Heatwave warning and health risk (Option 1)

The Bureau of Meteorology is warning of a <insert intensity – low/moderate/severe> heatwave in parts of <insert location>.

Because of <insert intensity> heatwave, we're having very hot weather even at night, making it hard to stay cool, especially with the levels of humidity.

Heatwaves can affect everyone, but certain groups, such as the elderly, pregnant women, or young children, might be more at risk.

Heat-related health issues can be severe and sometimes deadly.

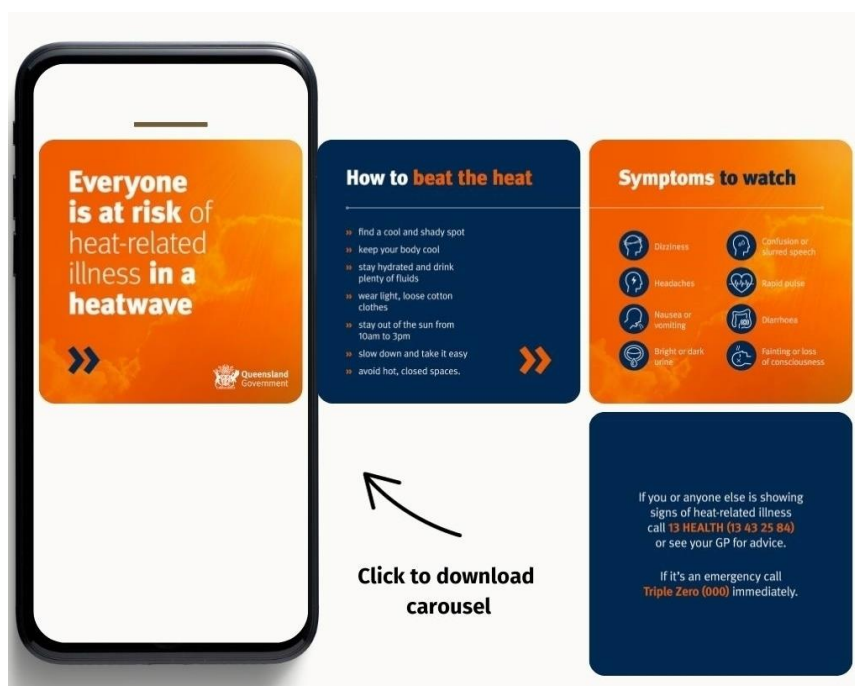
Learn more about how to beat the heat and signs of heat-related illness  (point to image). Please check on vulnerable friends, family or neighbours (like the elderly, pregnant or young kids).

If you or anyone else show signs of heat-related illness, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice, or visit your doctor.

If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.

Get updates from the [Queensland Bureau of Meteorology](http://www.bom.gov.au).



Post 2: Heatwave warning and health risk (Option 2)

There's a heatwave in **<insert location>** and everyone is at risk of heat-related illness.

To beat the heat, remember to:

💧 drink water (between 6-8 glasses each day)

👕 wear light, loose cotton clothes

🏃 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day

🧊 stay in air conditioning, or a cool environment

😓 slow down and take it easy

🔥 avoid hot, closed spaces

🕶️ be sun safe. Wear a hat and sunglasses, keep out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, wear long sleeves and light clothing and apply sunscreen every two hours.

Look out for these signs of heat-related illness:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- nausea or vomiting
- fainting
- bright or dark urine
- confusion or slurred speech
- rapid pulse
- diarrhoea
- loss of consciousness.

If you or anyone else shows signs of heat-related illness, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice, or visit your doctor. If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.

Get updates from the [Queensland Bureau of Meteorology](http://www.bom.gov.au/qld/).

Post 2: Food safety

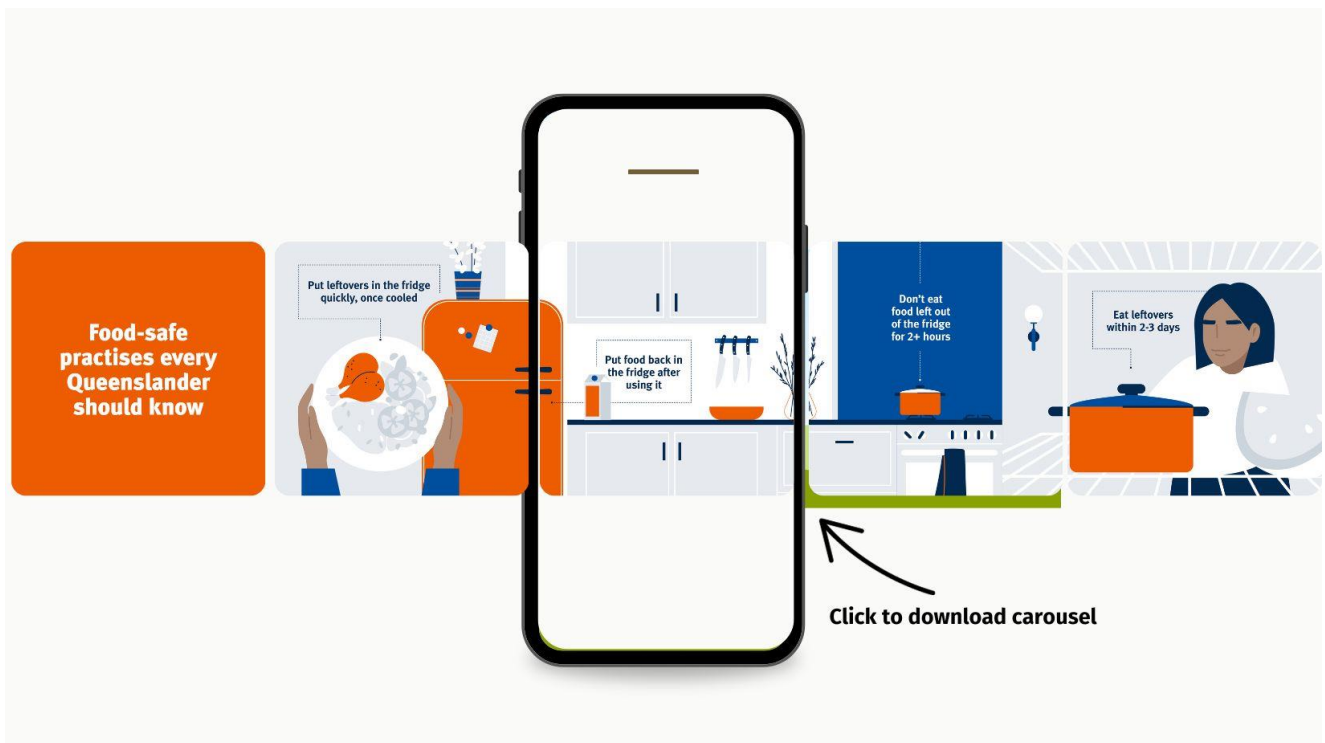
As the weather gets hot, it's important to keep your food fresh and safe.

During very high heat remember to:

- Always put food back in the fridge after use.
- Never eat food that's been out of the fridge for 2 or more hours.
- Put leftovers in the fridge once the food has cooled.
- Eat leftovers within 2–3 days for optimal freshness.
- Thaw and marinate meat in the fridge, not on the bench.
- Shop with a cooler bag and picnic with an esky.

Stay safe and enjoy your summer meals without a worry!

For more tips on food safety visit www.qld.gov.au



Post 3: Look before you lock

Every year in Queensland, children and pets are left alone in hot cars. This can be dangerous.

Inside a parked car, temperatures can reach between 20 and 40 degrees higher than outside.

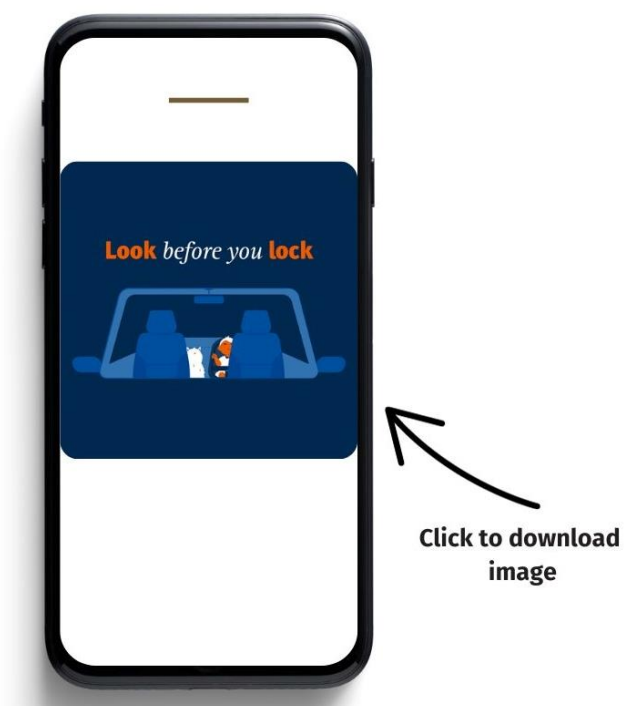
Young children are in danger because:

- They are more at risk of heatstroke
- They dehydrate quicker
- Their body temperatures increase 3 to 5 times faster than adults
- The extreme heat can lead to life-threatening conditions like heatstroke, brain injuries, heart, and lung failure or even death.

Never leave children or pets inside cars, even briefly, and don't give children your keys to play with.

Look before you lock, every time.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.



Short-form content

Queensland prepares for an intense summer

As Queenslanders, we're no strangers to our sunny and warm climate.

But this summer promises to bring more than just our standard heat.

With above-average heatwaves on the horizon, both in frequency and duration, residents are urged to prepare more than ever before.

You can do this by understanding the risks associated with extended heat exposure and being prepared for them.

This means keeping up to date with weather forecasts, planning outdoor activities, ensuring you have essential supplies, familiarising yourself with emergency contacts, and drinking plenty of water.

Beyond the physical strain, relentless heat can take a toll on our mental health, causing disrupted sleep and increased irritability.

And while certain groups, like the elderly or very young, are especially vulnerable, heat-related illnesses can impact everybody.

Symptoms to watch for range from sweating, headaches, nausea and muscle cramps, indicative of heat exhaustion, to more severe signs like rapid pulse, dizziness, impaired balance, irritability, confusion and loss of consciousness, hallmarks of heat stroke.

If you or someone you know has these symptoms, it's vital to act promptly: find shade, stay hydrated, and use wet towels to cool down.

If heat stroke is suspected, don't hesitate to call Triple Zero (000) for medical assistance.

Community safety is a shared responsibility. We can all play a part by minimising our exposure during the hottest parts of the day, seeking air-conditioned public spaces like libraries, and regularly checking on vulnerable neighbours or friends.

Simple yet effective relief methods, such as sipping cold water, applying cool towels, or using ice packs, can make all the difference.

Stay informed and stay cool. For comprehensive guidance on staying heat-safe this summer, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.

Impending heatwave event

Heatwave warning – stay safe and informed

We're bracing for an imminent heatwave in **<insert location>**.

The Bureau of Meteorology has alerted that **<moderate/severe>** conditions are set to affect **<insert location>** in the coming **<insert timeframe>**.

This severe weather is not just a matter of discomfort—it poses a genuine health risk to local residents.

It's essential to be prepared and well-informed during these times.

Here are some key steps and measures to ensure you and your loved ones stay safe:

Plan and prepare

- Monitor the weather using Bureau of Meteorology's [Heatwave Service](#).
- Store food and medication at a safe temperature.
- Plan ahead if the electricity goes out.
- Know who to call if you need help.
- Follow your doctor's advice if you have any medical conditions.

Stay as cool as possible

- Try to be indoors during the hottest part of the day.
- Close windows and doors to keep the heat out.
- Use air conditioning.
- Avoid or reduce strenuous activities.
- If you have to go outside, be sun safe by wearing a hat, long sleeves and light clothing, seeking shade where possible and applying sunscreen every two hours.

Drink water regularly and stay hydrated

- Drink water (between 6-8 glasses each day).
- Avoid alcoholic, hot or sugary drinks including tea and coffee (they can make dehydration worse).
- If you go outside, carry a bottle of water with you.

Look out for each other

- Keep in contact with elderly friends, neighbours and relatives during a heat wave in case you, or they, need help.
- Don't leave children or pets in parked cars.

Heat stress can cause a range of health problems, including heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heatstroke. If you are concerned you, or your loved one, is affected by one of these, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25) or Triple Zero (000) in an emergency.

For more information about heat-related illness, as well as tips on understanding your risk and caring for vulnerable people (including the elderly, pregnant or young kids) in hot weather, visit the Queensland Health [website](#).

Mini campaign series

A mini-campaign series called ‘Every **body** can overheat’ has been developed and will be rolled out through Queensland Health’s owned channels during summer (Nov 2023 – Mar 2024).

This campaign will run on Queensland Health Channels.



Screensaver/digital screens

A digital screensaver is available to download in landscape orientation.



[Download screensaver here](#)

Factsheet and preparation checklists

Keeping healthy in the heat

Heatwaves can affect everybody, potentially worsening health conditions and causing heat-related illnesses. They can also disrupt power supply.

How to prepare and manage for a heatwave

<p>Stay updated: monitor weather updates, using services like the Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave Service.</p>	<p>Home preparedness: stock essentials (food, water, medicines, toiletries) to minimise outdoor exposure. Keep ice packs and cool spray bottles ready.</p>
<p>Create a support network: decide who you'll call for help, and who you'll check on, like friends, neighbours, and relatives.</p>	<p>Safe storage: store foods and medicines at safe temperatures.</p>
<p>Cooling devices: ensure air conditioners and fans are working, and if you don't have them, plan where you can go to stay cool.</p>	<p>Emergency readiness: plan for power outages and transport disruptions. Keep a torch, charged phone, battery-operated radio, and backup batteries/power bank.</p>
<p>Seek medical advice: discuss heat management with your doctor, especially if you have a medical condition or have fluid intake restrictions.</p>	

Queensland Government

[Download factsheet here](#)

Heatwave preparation checklist

EVERYONE IS AT RISK OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

get ready
QUEENSLAND

<p>Monitor the weather, you can use the Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of overnight and maximum daytime temperatures and how long the heatwave has gone for. 	<p>Store enough medication at the right temperature.</p>
<p>Know who you will call for help.</p>	<p>Prepare your home by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storing cool packs in the fridge or freezer and making ice cubes Filling spray bottles with cool water to use on your face and body Checking fridges, freezers, fans and air-conditioners work well Stocking up on food and drinking water Creating cool rooms and cross breezes in your house Protecting windows from the sun by using blinds or curtains
<p>Know who you will check on, such as neighbours, friends, relatives and those who live alone.</p>	<p>Pack an emergency kit in case the power goes out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could include a torch, batteries, portable phone charger, candles, matches, a battery-operated radio and a first aid kit.
<p>Know local cool public spaces like libraries and shopping centres.</p>	
<p>Understand how to manage your medical condition by asking your doctor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your medical condition will be affected by extreme heat How much water you should drink in hot weather, especially if you normally need to limit the amount you drink How your medications could affect your health in the heat. 	

For more information visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe

Queensland Government

[Download checklist here](#)

How to stay safe in a heatwave

A heatwave is when it's hotter than usual for three days or more. Hot weather caused by a heatwave can make you sick.

Here are some ways you can stay safe

<p>Keep updated: Watch the news or visit weather websites, like the Bureau of Meteorology.</p>	<p>Store essentials: Have cold packs and spray bottles ready. You can buy these from supermarkets.</p>
<p>Stay connected: Know who to call if you need help. Talk to your family and friends.</p>	<p>Store items safely: Keep food and medicine in cool places like your pantry or fridge.</p>
<p>Stay cool: Make sure fans or air-conditioners work. Find a cool place, like a library, to go if you don't have them.</p>	<p>In case you lose power or electricity: Have a torch, a charged phone, a battery-operated radio, and extra batteries.</p>
<p>Get health advice: Talk to your doctor about staying cool during hot weather, especially if you have health issues or if you cannot drink lots of water.</p>	

Queensland Government

[Download CALD factsheet here](#)

Health Emergency Kit: Are You Prepared?

When emergencies happen, it's important you and your family have everything you need to stay healthy.

EMERGENCY KIT

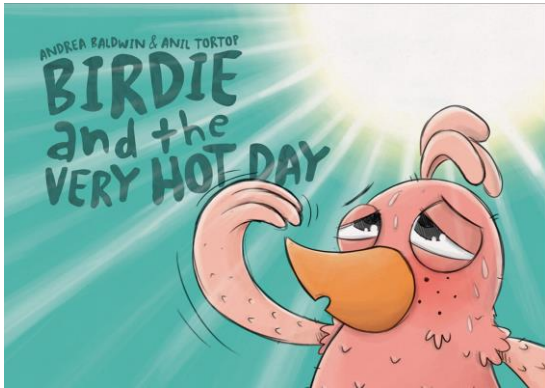
<p>Medications: A 7-day supply of all medication, from prescription to basic over-the-counter. This may include pain relief and allergy medications.</p>	<p>First aid supplies: A basic first aid kit that includes bandages, antibiotic ointment, gauze pads, scissors, tweezers, and a first aid manual.</p>
<p>Medical supplies (personal to your needs): This may include a thermometer, blood pressure monitor, stethoscope, CPAP machine or mobility aids and parts. Diabetics should include testers, strips, and insulin.</p>	<p>Sanitation supplies (to keep things clean): Hand sanitiser, bleach, water purification tablets, or other sanitation supplies.</p>
<p>Documents: Prescriptions, Medicare card, medical history, and healthcare contacts.</p>	<p>Power: Enough batteries or chargers for medical devices.</p>
<p>Protective gear: A face mask for everyone, especially those more vulnerable.</p>	<p>Storing your kit: Place it in a cool, dry spot, safe from pests and water. Ensure everyone in your home knows where it is and how to use it.</p> <p>Maintaining your kit: Replace expired items. Personalise your kit to meet the needs of your family members.</p>

Visit [Get Ready Queensland](#) to learn more about how to prepare for extreme weather

Queensland Government

[Download fact sheet for health emergency kit](#)

Other resources



[Watch video – Birdie and the very hot day](#)



Part 1 - Claire's warning:
Heat, humidity and health



Part 2 - Martin's story: Why
does age increase heat risk?



Part 3 - Heatwave ready: How
to stay safe during hot...

[View Ethos – Heat Health Early Warning System for Older Persons by Griffith University](#)

More information

[Hot weather health and safety](#)

[Get Ready Queensland](#)

[Reduce the risk of skin cancer](#)

[Preventing skin cancer](#)

[Heatwave service](#)

Cancer Council Queensland

[Sun protection](#)

Cancer Council Australia

[Sun safety](#)

Contact us

If you have any questions about the contents of this toolkit, please contact Queensland Health via email at: strategiccommunications@health.qld.gov.au.