



fact sheet

Care of Your Child in Hot Weather

Why can hot weather be a problem?

In hot weather, babies and young children can rapidly lose body fluids through perspiration. This loss of body fluids can lead to dehydration. Children must be watched more carefully than usual during hot weather, to make sure they are drinking well and not becoming dehydrated.

Feeding and drinking

Breastfed babies will want to feed more frequently in hot weather — and remember to have plenty of fluids yourself e.g. a cool drink every time you feed the baby. Bottle-fed babies may want more water. Boiled water that has been cooled may be given after the bottle. Remember to offer young children regular drinks during the day, not just at mealtimes, and take drinks with you if you go out. Water is best.

Frequent baths

Slightly cool baths are refreshing in hot weather and can cool a child's hot body. If you don't have a bath, you can use a cool face washer. Never leave children alone in a bath or paddling pool.

Light clothing and sun screen

It is often better to stay indoors on a hot day to keep your baby cool. Outdoor activities should be avoided during the hours of 11am to 3pm during daylight saving time. If you do need to go outside:

- Dress your baby in a nappy and a lightweight top;
- Find shade under trees, umbrellas or sunshade;
- Ensure your child has a well fitting sun hat;
- Use sunscreens specifically for babies/children and reapply during the day; and
- Take plenty of drinks for your child.



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Sleeping

During the day, find the coolest room in the house for your child to sleep. The floor is often the coolest place. If your child is sleeping on the floor, make sure that all pets are outside. Prams can restrict air flow. Avoid leaving your baby to sleep in a pram when the weather is hot.

During the night, the coolest place may be a passageway. The surrounding air can be cooled by hanging wet towels over chairs or windows to let the air pass through them. Fans in the room are helpful too, but do not point the fan directly at your child.

Mattresses and waterproof sheets need to be covered with a thick layer of cotton sheets to absorb perspiration, and prevent prickly heat rash. Do not use a pillow or mattress which allows your baby to sink down. Do not use padding around the cot. The air must be able to circulate around your baby.

Travelling

Never leave babies or young children alone in a car. Even in mild weather, a car can become too hot and uncomfortable for small children. In hot weather, cars are like hot ovens. Just opening the windows a little does not help. A child can become dehydrated in a very short time. Keep the car windows open while the car is moving unless your car has an air conditioner. Where possible, avoid hot cars and make trips in the coolest time of the day.

Caring for a sick child in hot weather

Sick children need close attention in hot weather. Even minor illnesses, such as colds or gastroenteritis, need special care when the weather is hot. These illnesses often lead to a slight rise in temperature by themselves, but in hot weather the risk of dehydration increases. Frequent breastfeeding and extra fluids or drinks are very important if your baby has an illness.

Warning signs

In hot weather, watch your child closely for signs of dehydration. Dehydration may be a risk if your child:

- is not eating or drinking;
- is sleepy, irritable or crying;
- has fewer wet nappies;
- has hot and dry skin;



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- has a dry mouth;
- has a body temperature around 40 C; and/or
- has vomiting or diarrhea.

If you see one or more of these signs, take your child to your doctor or nearest hospital. When the weather is hot, and there is a rise in the child's temperature, you must see a doctor immediately. On the way to a doctor or hospital:

- Keep your child cool;
- Make sure the car air conditioner is on — or if you do not have an air conditioner, that the car windows are open (but the air should not be blowing directly onto your child); and
- Do not wrap your child in thick blankets.

Where to get further information

- Your doctor.
- Your local maternal and child health nurse.
- Your local hospital emergency or casualty department.

Points to remember

- Babies overheat quickly in hot weather.
- Babies and young children need to drink regularly to stop dehydration.
- If possible, stay indoors in hot weather.
- Dress your child in light clothing, a hat, and use sunscreen if going outside.
- Put your child to sleep in the coolest room in the house - allow air to circulate.
- Make sure babies and young children are never left alone in the car.
- See your doctor if you are concerned about your child's health.

Contact your doctor, ACT Health (health.act.gov.au/publications) or ACT Ambulance Service for more information.