



Extreme heat

Extreme heat or heatwaves are periods of unusually hot weather that cause people to become ill from potentially fatal conditions, such as heat stress, heatstroke or dehydration.

Extreme heat can affect everyone. However, those most at risk are older people, children and those with chronic conditions, immunocompromise or who are receiving chemotherapy. It can also affect community infrastructure, such as power supply, public transport and other services.

The Bureau of Meteorology uses three heatwave categories based on intensity: low, severe and extreme. It issues area-specific warnings when 10 per cent or more of a weather district is at severe or extreme levels. This is defined as at least three days of unusually high maximum and minimum temperatures for that location.

During severe heatwaves, vulnerable people are at risk, while during an extreme heatwave everyone is at risk.

Who is at risk?	Vulnerable populations include older people, infants and children, people with comorbidities, those who live alone or who are socially isolated, people with a cognitive impairment, or have an alcohol or other substance use issue, and those who live in housing settings with inadequate cooling systems.
Keep up to date with alerts and information	• Subscribe to the Department of Health’s heat alerts • Australia’s official weather forecasts and weather radar - Bureau of Meteorology
Extreme heat information for clinicians	The Victorian Department of Health (DoH) provides these information sheets: • Extreme heat - information for clinicians • Heat health plan for vulnerable mental health consumers • Extreme heat factsheet for clinicians • Extreme heat: supporting people by telephone
Information to share with patients	These resources are useful for patients: • Extreme heat - Better Health Channel • Service Finder – healthdirect • How to cope and stay safe in extreme heat - brochure - DOH • Survive the heat - poster - DOH • My Health Record – Australian Digital Health Agency

General emergency planning and preparation

Update your emergency response documents	The RACGP - Emergency Response Planning Tool (ERPT) is a cloud based, practical online tool that assists general practices to better prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of emergencies and pandemics. It guides users through a series of planning templates where critical information about the practice can be entered and saved. The information is used to create an emergency response plan which is individually tailored to the general practice. The customised plan is then saved and stored in the cloud and can also be printed as a hard copy resource at any time. This will not only help you to stay focused and respond under pressure but get your business back up and running more quickly. Access to the ERPT requires an annual subscription.
Clinical, management and referral advice for general practices	HealthPathways Melbourne pages for information on diagnosis, treatment and referrals: • Heat Related Illnesses • Preparing Patients for a Disaster • Preparing a General Practice for a Disaster • General Practice Management During a Disaster • Post Natural Disaster Health
Communicate service closures or impacts	Use social media and other platforms. Prepare a message or email to patients using appointment your confirmation system or Pen CS if needed.
Plan staffing	In the event of no or reduced access to your site -- or if significant numbers of staff are absent -- consider alternative models of work, including sites and equipment needs. For more information, see the ERPT. Key questions: • Is it safe for practitioners to work from home? Are there other health services or locations from which they work? • Does the practice have a telehealth platform that practitioners can use from remote locations? • Are the practitioners set up with ePrescribing so patients can obtain scripts immediately? Do they all have paper scripts and prescribing pads for use if no internet is available? • Does the practice have an alternative contact number, or can you temporarily divert your practice number, so patients can call if the building is closed, and the phone system is inaccessible? • Can admin and clinical staff access your practice management and clinical software systems offsite to facilitate remote models of care? • Are clinicians able to create pathology and imaging requests if working remotely? • Have information available for the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED) to share with patients.
Join the emergency volunteer list	If you have capacity to support in an emergency event, record your interest using the Emergency Response Register.

Contact us

For more information or support email primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au

We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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