

Avoiding Heat-Related Stress – Information for Childcare Centres

Young children and babies are more vulnerable to heat-related stress than adults because their bodies do not adapt as well to changes in temperature. Very young children are at particular risk as they may not be able to communicate their needs. The following are simple precautions parents and childcare workers can take to avoid heat-related stress in young children:

Parents

- Make sure your child has a bottle of water at childcare.
- Make sure your child is wearing appropriate clothing for hot weather (e.g. lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing).
- Ensure your child has appropriate sun protective equipment (e.g. wide-brimmed or bucket hats, UV-protection rated clothing, sunscreen). Remove potentially hazardous cords from hats for very young children.
- If your childcare centre requires that your child bring their own food, ensure you pack appropriate food for hot weather. This means plenty of fruit and vegetables, and avoiding salty foods and foods that need refrigeration.
- If you give your child food that requires refrigeration (e.g. ham, dairy products, fish, rice, etc.), use an insulated lunchbox or bag. A frozen drink bottle or freezer brick will help maintain a safe temperature.
- If you have any concerns, discuss your childcare centre's hot-weather policy with staff members.

Childcare Workers

- Monitor children for signs of heat-related stress (tiredness, irritability, fewer wet nappies, nausea, headaches, vomiting, dizziness or faintness).
- If a child does present with signs of heat-related stress, give them water and allow them to rest in a cool, shaded area. If their condition does not improve, or they show any signs of worsening, seek medical help immediately. The child could have heat-stroke, which is a very serious condition.
- Offer children a drink of water frequently – before, during and after play. Babies can be offered cooled boiled water in addition to normal feeds.
- Avoid doing outside activities with children in the heat of the day (generally between 11 am and 3 pm).

- Check on babies regularly and monitor nappy changes (well hydrated babies should regularly wet their nappies). Babies can be offered cooled boiled water in addition to normal feeds.
- If your centre provides food, remember to be extra vigilant about food safety during hot weather. If children bring their own food, keep an eye out for food which may not be suitable for consumption without refrigeration.
- If you do see children with food that has not been stored at a safe temperature, discuss the importance of temperature control with parents.

For more information visit the ACT Health website: www.health.act.gov.au

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