

Avoiding Heat-Related Stress – Information for Schools

Children are more vulnerable to heat-related stress than adults. This is because children's bodies are less able to adapt to increases in temperature, and children may not recognise the need to take preventative action such as reducing physical activity.

Parents and teachers need to be aware of the vulnerability of children to heat-related stress.

The following tips are simple precautions for avoiding heat-related stress in children.

Parents

- Make sure your child takes a bottle of water to school and/or has easy access to water at school all day.
- Make sure your child is wearing appropriate clothing for hot weather (e.g. lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing or for school uniforms, use the summer uniform).
- Ensure your child has appropriate sun protective equipment (e.g. wide-brimmed or bucket hats, UV-protection rated clothing, sunscreen).
- Ensure your child has 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.

Teachers

- Monitor children for signs of heat-related stress (e.g. tiredness, irritability, 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 become disoriented, confused or non-responsive then seek urgent medical attention. Severe heat-related illness (heat-stroke) is potentially life-threatening.
- Ensure children have access to water at all times. Encourage children to have regular drinks and not large amounts of water all at once.

- Avoid doing outside or sporting activities with children in the hottest part of the day (generally between 11 am and 3 pm). If activities are conducted during hot weather, avoid direct sun and have regular drink/rest breaks.

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

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