

## **Care Sector communication:**

As we are experiencing hot weather and have Level 3 and Level 4 heat alerts in place for most of North Yorkshire early next week, we are reminding you of the key messages and tips to keep your residents and staff safe in warm weather. See the full plan of how to support vulnerable people during a [heatwave here](#).

### **1. Implement business continuity plans and check staffing**

- Ensure your business continuity plans are implemented, you are familiar with the heatwave guidance, and understand the actions within. Ensure staff are aware of the temperatures expected and the additional things they need to do and look out for
- Staffing and rotas may need to be amended, think about shorter shifts or longer breaks where possible. Health and social care workers will need to take more frequent breaks to cool down which may impact on productivity
- Ensure staff maintain PPE as required and encourage more frequent changing of PPE, especially masks, to keep cool and comfortable. Give staff the space to cool down and stay hydrated.

For more advice on PPE, and keeping staff safe during the warmer weather see



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### **2. Monitor residents**

Watch for any changes in behaviour, especially excessive drowsiness. Ensure those most at risk of heat related illness are monitored closely. Watch for signs of headache, unusual tiredness, weakness, giddiness, disorientation or sleeping problems.

#### **a. Know the signs of dehydration**

- Symptoms of dehydration in adults and children include:
  - feeling thirsty
  - dark yellow and strong-smelling pee
  - feeling dizzy or lightheaded
  - feeling tired
  - a dry mouth, lips and eyes
  - peeing little, and fewer than 4 times a day

#### **b. Know the signs of heat exhaustion**

- Heat exhaustion may be present in residents and colleagues.
- The signs of heat exhaustion include:
  - a headache
  - dizziness and confusion
  - loss of appetite and feeling sick
  - excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
  - cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
  - fast breathing or pulse
  - a high temperature of 38C or above
  - being very thirsty

UK Health Security Agency

### **Residents in care homes**

are particularly vulnerable in hot weather.

Know how to keep your residents and the environment cool.



- **If someone is showing signs of heat exhaustion, they need to be cooled down. Call NHS 111 or Immedicare for advice if needed and always call 999 in an emergency.**
  - For more information on heat exhaustion and heat stroke visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/>

### **3. Reduce the temperature indoors**

- Encourage residents to remain in the coolest parts of the building as much as possible. Outside may be cooler than inside at times. If you do not have thermometers in rooms, try to get some ahead of the warmest weather, or use ones you have in different parts of your setting. Check indoor temperatures are recorded regularly during the hottest periods for all areas that residents use.
- Move residents so that each spends time in the cool room/area (below 26°C) – give priority and extra time to high-risk residents or any showing signs of distress (including increased body temperature). For patients who cannot be moved, or for whom a move might be too disorienting, take actions to cool them down (for example, liquids, cool wipes) and enhance surveillance.
- Close windows and curtains on rooms facing the sun and be aware that it may be warmer outside than inside at times. If taking residents outside to cool down, try to stay in the shade.
- Residents in isolation due to COVID-19 or other infectious diseases need to be cooled down just as much as other residents. Consider how you can get those residents outside safely to cool down if needed avoiding contact with other residents, and follow the guidance issued regarding fan use. Where possible try to keep windows open in COVID positive rooms to improve ventilation and reduce virus spread, if this is not possible because the room will get too hot, then close the window and consider other ways to cool the individual down, including going outside.

### **4. Reduce heat related health risks, stay hydrated and keep cool**

- Keep everyone hydrated! Think about other ways of increasing fluid intake, ice-lollies, juices, and fruit may be helpful.
- Monitor residents' fluid intake, providing regular cold drinks, particularly if they are not always able to drink unaided. Regularly replace water jugs to keep water cool.
  - Remember the importance of increasing fluid intake during periods of high temperature to reduce the risk of infections.
  - Oral rehydration salts may be suggested for those on high doses of diuretics; bananas, orange juice and occasional salty snacks can also help replace salts lost due to sweating.
- Advise residents to avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, and colas), very sweet drinks and alcohol.
- Encourage residents to wear light, loose cotton clothes to absorb sweat and prevent skin irritation.
- Regularly sprinkle or spray cool water on exposed parts of the body – a damp cloth on the back of the neck helps with temperature regulation.
- Arrange cool showers or baths, if possible.
- Apply high factor sun cream and wear a hat where possible if going outside.