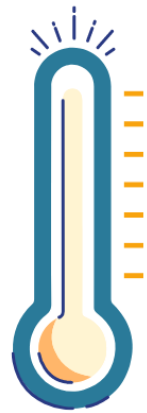
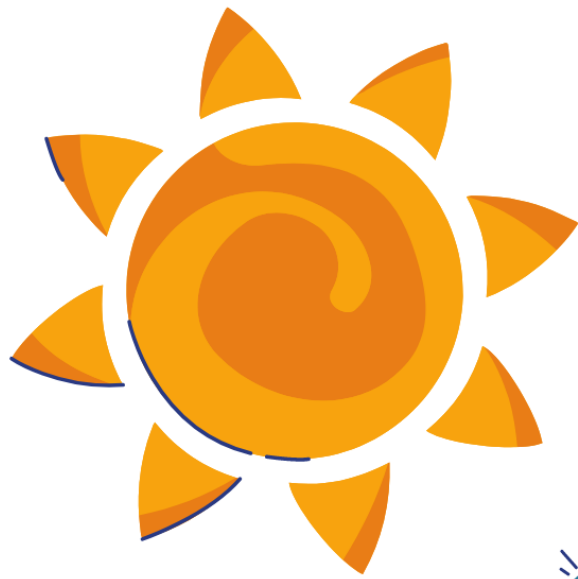


# Advisory Note

## Heat Waves



## What is a heat wave?

Extreme heat or heat wave<sup>1</sup> occurs when the temperature reaches extremely high levels (an increase of 4- 5 degree above the normal maximum temperature of 40 degree in plains and 30 degree in hills) or when the combination of heat and humidity causes the air to become oppressive.

## Who is most affected?

Elderly, Infants, Children, Pregnant women, Street Vendors, Outdoor and manual workers, Indigenous Population, Urban Poor, People with disability, and individuals with chronic diseases (and who are taking medications).

## Symptoms of heat stress on humans<sup>2</sup>:

What to look for	What to do
<b>Heat Cramps:</b> Edema (swelling) are generally accompanied by fevers below 39°C i.e.,102°F.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Stop physical activity and move to a cool place</li><li>● Drink cool , clean water and use ORS and glucose packets.</li><li>● <b>Get medical help right way</b> - if you have heart problems or on a low sodium diet or if the symptoms persist or continue</li></ul>
<b>Heat Exhaustion:</b> Profuse sweating, fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Move to a cool place</li><li>● Loosen the clothes</li><li>● Put cool wet clothes on the body or pour water on the skin to regulate body temperature</li><li>● Sip water</li><li>● <b>Get medical help right away</b> - if you are throwing up or if the symptoms worsens</li></ul>
<b>Heat Stroke:</b> Very high body temperatures ( 40°C i.e., 104°F or more) along with confusion, seizures or coma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>To be treated as a medical emergency - Call medical emergency helpline</b></li><li>● Move the person to a cooler place and remove excessive clothing if applicable.</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> List of districts in India which are the most vulnerable to heat wave; [📍 Heatwave-Most Vulnerable Districts](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Warning Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC Extreme Heat Waves and Mitigation](#)

<p>Syncope (Fainting) Nausea and vomiting Hot, red and damp skin Headache Fast pulse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase circulation of cool air around them.</li> <li>● Give the person a cold bath or place cold towels/packs on their body (especially head, neck, armpits and groin).</li> <li>● Do not give anything to drink (as it could lead to choking or other complications, if the person is incapacitated or there is compromised airways)</li> </ul>
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## How to prevent<sup>3</sup> heat stress:

### 1. What to eat?

According to ancient Indian knowledge, what you eat directly affects your overall health.

During summer, we must eat foods that help retain water in the body and prevent dehydration such as:

- **Vegetables:** local gourds- bitter gourd, bottle gourd , snake gourd, pumpkin, root vegetables [beetroot, carrot, radish], green leafy vegetables. Cucumber is 96% water and delicious.
- **Fruits and berries:** amla/indian gooseberry, bananas, watermelon, mango, lemon, tomato and so on.
- Include local flours or pulses like *sattu* or moong.
- Local foods like *tambuli/thambli* or local equivalents are highly cooling and aid in digestion because they include spices and herbs like ginger and curry leaves mixed in curd.
- If possible, include some ghee in at least one meal.
- Try to avoid fried, salty foods
- Try to avoid using a lot of sugar.

What local dishes do can make to beat the heat and what ingredients do you use?

Opt for seasonal, easily available foods - if some of the foods listed are more expensive for you or out of season, check for and include better options that will work for you.

### 2. What to drink?

- Drink cool water from an earthen pot kept in a shady corner of the room frequently even when you're not feeling thirsty.
- Soak coriander seeds in drinking water overnight for improved nutrition.

<sup>3</sup> [Heat wave: Do's & Don'ts | NDMA. GoI](#)

What methods of purifying and storing water do you know of from your region/family?

- Avoid drinking very cold/icy water as it may lead to stomach cramps and indigestion.
- Avoid hot, dehydrating drinks like alcohol, tea, coffee and aerated beverages (like soda).
- Coconut water, sugarcane or lime juice are local, easy to access and refreshing.
- Other local, homemade drinks can include lassi, torani (rice water) and buttermilk.
- Consume ORS and glucose powder if you're working outdoors.

**When you have to relieve yourself, your urine needs to be clear. You need to drink even more than you are drinking.**

### 3. What to do for your skin & body?

Heat rashes and sunburns are common in this season but there are natural remedies to prevent or treat these:

- Herbs like aloe vera, sandalwood, neem, rose, basil and vetiver are traditionally used for soothing and cooling skin -check if they are locally available. If they are not, use a good, affordable lotion which contains these.
- Baking soda can also be used in bath water.
- Apply cooling and strengthening oils like coconut and sesame to your head.
- Light exercise early in the morning will help tone and prepare the body for the working day, and also cool it when the sweat evaporates.
- Use traditional herbal recipes for skin cooling and hydrating usually practiced by your family/community

### 4. What to do when outdoors?

It is best to avoid outdoor physical work from 10 am to 3 pm but if this is not possible for you, these are some things you can do :

- Wear natural fabrics like cotton in light colours- avoid polyester and other synthetic fabric that will block the skin.
- Use hats and other headgear in the same fabrics.
- Keep a clean, dampened cloth with you to wear around your head/neck.
- Carry a portable battery fan or a simple hand fan made of good natural material.
- If you're in an area with a lot of air pollution, consider using a light cotton mask to avoid dust and chemicals.
- Take short rest breaks frequently in between work.
- Try to find a natural shaded area, like a big tree, to sit under during breaks, if this is not possible, then sit under any shaded area with good ventilation.
- Wash your hands before eating.

### 5. What to do indoors?

Your home should be a haven against the heat and dust and pollution outside, but it can be crowded, dark and get very hot. These are some things you can consider as quick fixes wherever possible:

- Use ceiling fans if the temperature is below 35 degree celsius. If the temperature is much higher than 35 degrees and the air is very humid, then use fans only if you have good ventilation. This is because the constant circulation of hot air in a closed environment is worse for your health and wellbeing.
- Consider switching to floor fans and water coolers wherever possible so that you can enjoy cooler air.
- Turn off bulbs and other electrical devices that generate heat as much as possible.
- Include natural screens made of vetiver, straw and so on to shield your windows, especially the ones that receive the most sunlight during the day. Avoid metallic or plastic screens/curtains that absorb heat.
- Keep these windows open at night for more air circulation.
- Keep bowls of water around the house to promote evaporation and cooling.
- Keep plants near your windows and also inside your house if possible.
- Try to use lighter colours to paint the outside of your house.
- Try to use natural clay roofs as a replacement for tin and metal roofs that will absorb and retain heat.

Please Note: This advisory is drafted by Catalyst Group's Health and Climate domain teams, at Swasti, GREEN Foundation and Catalyst Management Services for partners of Community Action Collab.

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