

Summer Health Advice

How to protect yourself in hot weather

A little bit of sunshine is good for us and can lift our spirits – let's face it, it can often be a welcome change from the long drawn out Welsh winter. There is no clear distinction between the seasons these days. So whatever our Welsh summer throws our way, it's important that we're prepared for all eventualities.

Extreme temperatures, still air and humidity are unpleasant for many of us, sleepless nights, feeling sticky, feeling tired. But it can also be dangerous, particularly for those with breathing difficulties and heart problems.

This leaflet is a gentle reminder of the things we can do to keep ourselves cool, safe and well in extreme heat. As we get older our bodies are often slow to recognise our needs and at regulating our temperature.

Top safety tip:

Speak to your GP or practice nurse if you're taking medication that affects water retention.

Top tip:

Always carry a drink with you when out and about. An insulated flask will keep cold drinks cold for longer – much more refreshing and cooling than sipping from a plastic bottle or uninsulated alternative, which gets warm in the heat of the sun.

Heatwaves can happen suddenly – taking us by surprise, so keep a check on the weather forecast. The Meteorological Office (Met Office) has a warning system if a heatwave is likely.

Listen out for heatwave warnings on the television or the radio, or check the Met Office website: metoffice.gov.uk

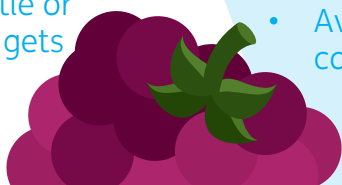


Drink cool water based drinks throughout the day

- Keep thirst at bay – feeling thirsty is a sign you're already dehydrated.
- You can keep hydrated by drinking little and often throughout the day.
- Water based drinks and milk are particularly re-hydrating.
- If you're not a big drinker – use a smaller drinking glass but don't forget to drink up and top up.

Eat cool foods

- Eat as normal. Even if you're not particularly hungry.
- Fruit and vegetables contain a lot of water, so can be a cooling, refreshing and hydrating.
- Fruit and salads are high in much needed vitamins, minerals and fibre - you'll be rehydrating and eating healthily.
- Frozen fruit and veg are often a cheaper option and stay fresh, so there's less waste.
- Store fresh fruit and veg correctly in the fridge and wash before eating.
- Avoid leaving food out and uncovered - cover and store away from pesky flies.



Protect your skin - Be burns aware

Ageing skin will suffer the effects of the sun in a shorter time frame. Just 10 minutes can be too long for some. Get to know your skin type and look for any changes to your skin's texture and appearance.

It can be easy to underestimate the strength of the sun when you're outside especially if there's a cool breeze. The wind and getting wet, such as going in and out of the sea, may cool your skin, so you don't realise you're burning.

You should always be aware of the risk of sunburn if you're outside in strong sun. If your skin is hot to the touch you are burning. You can also burn in cloudy and cool conditions.

- Use sunscreen of at least SPF30 (sun protection factor 30) with four or five stars UVA and UVB protection.
- Apply sunscreen generously. Ideally you'll want to:
 - o Apply as you're getting dressed in the morning.
 - o Apply again to areas not covered by clothes, half an hour before going out into the sun.
 - o Reapply at least every one and a half to two hours and, if you've been in water or sweating, dry yourself off and reapply.
 - o Apply it to your ears as well as your face, nose, neck, behind the ears, arms, back of the hands, tops of feet and toes.
 - o Apply to any bald or thinning patches on your head and along your parting line.

Top tips:

Putting your feet up in the garden? Don't forget to apply sunscreen to the soles of your feet – yes, this sensitive area can burn too

- Avoid spending long periods outside during the hottest time of the day, which is usually from 11am to 3pm ☀
- In extreme heat this can often be as early as 9am and as late as 8pm, so take care and stay in the shade.

Protect your eyes

- UV rays can cause damage to your eyes, even in cool weather and on a cloudy day, so wear sunglasses that have a CE mark, British Standard BS EN ISO 12312-1, UV400 label or a statement that they provide 100 per cent UV (ultraviolet A and B) protection.
- Speak to an optician about prescription sunglasses or special shades that fit over or clip onto your ordinary prescription glasses.
- Wraparound styles offer protection from both the front and sides.

Take it easy

Hot weather can make us feel tired and sluggish during the day. That's because our bodies are using more energy to regulate our internal temperature.

- Avoid too much activity, especially at the hottest times of the day.
- Save essential chores such as gardening, washing the car, washing the windows general housework and maintenance for the coolest parts of the day – early morning or late evening.

Taking it easy means that your body won't have to over work to regulate the increase in your temperature from working hard, on top of having to regulate your temperature from the hot weather.



To cool off

- Place your hands in cool water, use a cool flannel to place on the back of your neck, across your forehead, behind your knees and in the folds of your arms.
- Place your feet in a bowl of cool water – enjoy a paddle.
- Take cool baths or showers.

Top tip: Keep after sun and moisturisers in the fridge – these can be cooling when applying to warm skin.

Keep your home cool

- When inside, try to stay in the coolest parts of your home. You may have to alter where you spend time depending on the time of day and which side of your home catches the sunlight.
- It may be an idea to move rooms and sleep in the cooler part of your home.
- Keep the heat out by closing windows, curtains and blinds when it's hotter outside.
- Turn off non-essential items when not in use, lights, and electronic items, such as iPads, phones and kindles can generate heat when plugged in.
- Fans can help sweat to evaporate but they don't cool the air itself, so don't rely on them to keep you well in the heat.

Top tips:

Place a bowl of ice or cold water in front of a fan to help cool the air

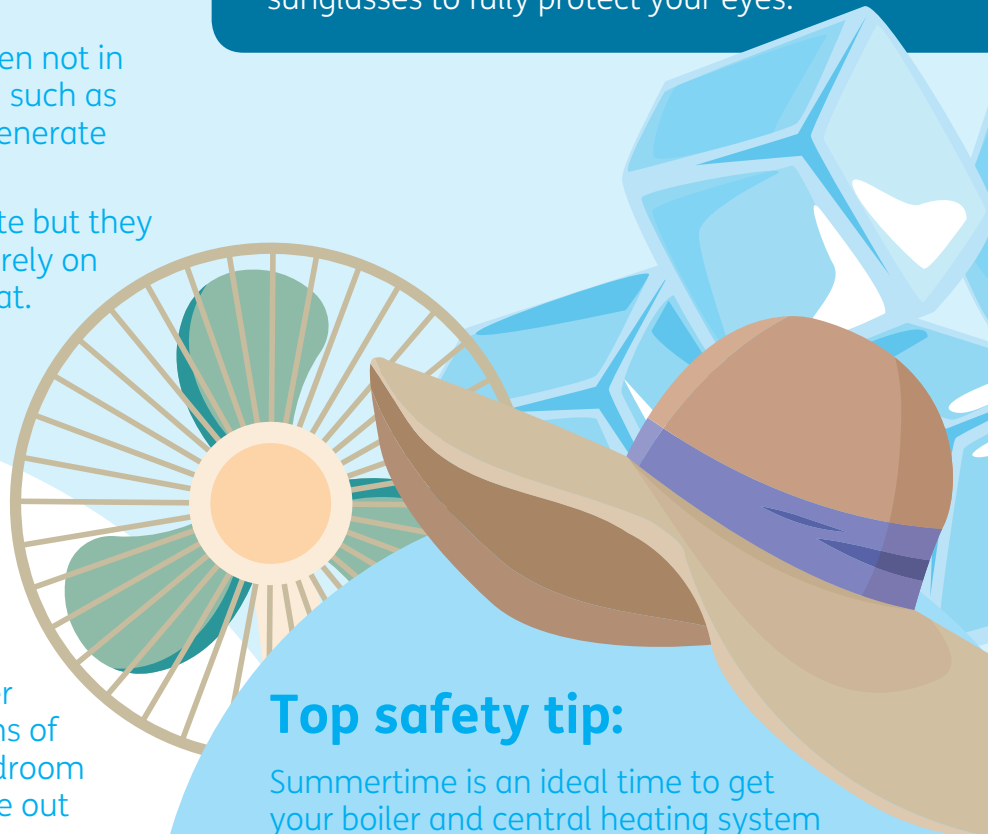
- Keep an Age Cymru thermometer card in the commonly used rooms of your home for example, your bedroom and main living room. Place these out of direct sunlight.
- Check that your central heating is switched to off and that it isn't faulty.

Dress for the weather

- What you wear can make a real difference to how you handle the heat. Light coloured clothing won't absorb the sun's heat as much.
- Choose lightweight clothing made from natural materials. Natural materials such as cottons and linens are more breathable allowing air to circulate - this helps draw sweat away from your body, which helps to cool you down.
- Wear sandals that fit your feet securely and offer good grip underfoot and support – adjustable straps are ideal if your feet are prone to swelling.

Tip: Wear cotton pyjamas for a more comfortable night sleep.

Top tip: Wear a broad brimmed hat. A hat will protect your head, scalp, face, ears and eyes. But you will still need your sunglasses to fully protect your eyes.



Top safety tip:

Summertime is an ideal time to get your boiler and central heating system serviced by a Gas Safe Registered engineer, as they may not be in such high demand.

You and your medication

Medication: If you're taking medication check with the pharmacist how to store these safely in hot weather.

- If you're on medication that affects the amount of fluid you should drink, get advice from your GP on what to do in hot weather.
 - Some medications can make the effects of the heat worse – where you sweat more as your body tries to control your temperature, some medications make your skin more sensitive to the sun. Talk to your GP or pharmacist about how best to manage this, especially if you're on a number of different medications and/or have a long-term health condition.
 - Keep taking your prescribed medication unless advised differently by your pharmacist/GP.
 - Make sure you have enough medication – if you're planning on sheltering from the sun and don't want to go out.
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Sunlight and vitamin D

We get most of our vitamin D from sunlight exposure.

While it's important to protect your skin, some exposure to sunlight is essential to the production of vitamin D, which we all need for healthy bones, teeth and muscles. It's important to find a balance. When we're not experiencing extreme hot weather and strong sunlight it's important to go out in the sun every day for very short periods.

Contact Age Cymru Advice

Contact Age Cymru Advice to see about arranging extra support if you feel you'll need it. Perhaps you'd like assistance with shopping, gardening, home cleaning or simply someone to chat to and check in on you.

Our bilingual (Welsh/English) advisers can talk you through the services available to you in your area.

They can be reached by calling **Freephone 08000 223 444**.

Lines are open Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm or you can **email advice@agecymru.org.uk**

Call on others neighbours, relatives and friends who live alone, to make sure that they're not having difficulties in the heat.

If they're feeling unwell but the problem is not a medical emergency, call **NHS Direct Wales** on **0845 46 47**.

For more information and advice you can visit our website **www.agecymru.org.uk/summer**

