

# Caring for children in heat

## Fact sheet

Babies and young children are more susceptible to heat-related illness than adults, because their bodies cannot easily adapt to changing temperatures. The younger the child, the quicker they will start to show signs of dehydration or heat stress. Sick children need special attention in hot weather, even for minor illnesses such as a cold or hay fever.

### Stay hydrated and well nourished

- ensure your child has easy access to plain water and encourage them to drink it, even before they become thirsty
- avoid using ice
- do not give children drinks that cause dehydration - such as drinks high in sugar, salt and/or caffeine
- if you are breastfeeding, feed your baby more often and drink plenty of water yourself
- give bottle-fed babies cool, boiled water between feeds
- give children small regular meals and minimise hot food.

### Babies

- 0 to 6 months - rely on breast milk, so offer breastfeeds more frequently. Water or other drinks are not needed unless recommended by a doctor
- 6 to 12 months - need food and fluids in addition to breast milk, so give small amounts of cooled boiled water after or in between breastmilk feeds
- over 12 months - need solid foods and drinks, continue breastfeeding, or give full cream milk via a cup. Offer cooled boiled water after or in between meals.

### Monitor your child's urine rate

- babies - monitor the number of wet nappies. If your baby has fewer wet nappies than usual in 24 hours, see a doctor or ring 13 HEALTH for advice
- young children - urine should be a light straw colour. Dark urine may be a sign of dehydration and indicate the need to drink. If you are concerned, see a doctor or ring 13 HEALTH for advice.

### Stay cool

- dress children in loose fitting, single layered, cotton clothing
- keep children cool by giving them regular lukewarm baths or showers. Do not use ice cold water.
- avoid taking your child outside between 10am - 3pm
- use a suitable sunshade on your baby's stroller

- ensure children wear broad-brimmed hats and SPF 30+ to avoid sunburn
- be aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, which may cause a child to be more heat-sensitive
- children may experience nappy rash when it is hot - avoid using talcum powder, keep area clean and dry.

Never leave children unattended in hot cars

## Further information

- Call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) at any time
- Contact 13 QGOV (13 74 68) for your nearest public health unit.