

# Heatwave checklist for primary health care providers

## Prevention

Stay informed about weather forecasts and heatwave warnings issued by the [Bureau of Meteorology \(BOM\)](https://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave)

- Save the link <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave> to your favourites and check functionality.

Implement the following measures to reduce heat exposure within the practice's premises:

- Upgrade window tint.
- Review window treatments, such as curtains and blinds.
- Install insulation to the building.
- Install air-conditioning and/or fans.

Book in pre-summer maintenance of cooling systems, including air-conditioning and refrigeration devices.

Meet with the team to outline actions to be taken during heatwaves and extreme heat events:

- Consider staff personal care, including prioritising personal health and wellbeing during heatwaves.
- Consider fatigue management strategies during heatwaves, including break times.
- Consider reminding staff to report maintenance concerns about the practice's premises.

Educate staff about heat-related illness and health problems, including the signs, symptoms, prevention and management.

## Preparedness

- Develop a [business continuity plan](#) that includes specific strategies for heatwave scenarios.
- Identify critical functions and resources required to maintain operations during a heatwave and secure necessary functions and resources prior to high-risk season.
- Establish alternative communication channels in case of power outages or disruptions:
  - Consider two-way radio, mobile phone, email and secure private messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp).
- Stock up on essential supplies, such as bottled water, electrolytes and cooling packs.
- Create an offline contact list of emergency services, including local hospitals and nearby cooling centres.

## Response (during a heatwave)

- Monitor the temperature within the practice and implement measures to keep it within a safe range.
- Encourage staff to stay hydrated and take regular breaks in cooler areas.
- Modify working hours to avoid peak heat periods, if feasible.
- Implement a buddy system to ensure staff members are checking in on other's wellbeing.
- Provide regular updates and guidance to staff regarding heatwave conditions and any operational changes.

## Recovery

- Assess any damage or disruptions caused by the heatwave and prioritise recovery actions.
- Review the effectiveness of the business continuity plan and identify/amend areas for improvement.
- Provide support and resources to staff members who may have been affected by heat-related illness.
- Conduct a debriefing session to gather feedback and lessons learned from the heatwave event.
- Update the heatwave guidance and business continuity plan based on the experiences and insights gained.