

In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



Dear Colleague

SAFE SUMMER IN SCOTLAND

1. We all hope for a good summer to enjoy the outdoors in Scotland, regardless of what our often variable weather brings. This is a significant year for Scotland with events such as the Commonwealth Games, War Commemorations and the Ryder Cup all taking place. It is important that we remember to stay safe this summer, as in any year.

2. The purpose of this letter is to advise you of information and guidance available on the NHS Inform website to help people to be ready and prepared for a Safe Summer in Scotland. This website will highlight key summer messages and web links including **Heat and Sun Safety; Outdoor Hazards; Food Safety; Animal Attraction Visit Safety; and Travel advice**, with the aim of reducing the risks of illness and injury to those living in and visiting Scotland this summer.

3. I would be grateful if you could disseminate this letter within your organisations and, where appropriate, signpost the public to the relevant websites for information. NHS Inform hosts a range of useful information and also directs users to other relevant websites, a list of which accompanies this letter at **Appendix 1**.

4. These messages are relevant across the population, but health and social care professionals and carers are particularly well-placed to identify and support individuals and groups who may be at increased risk of adverse effects. Further information for health and social care professionals, for schools and early years settings and for those organising mass gathering events is provided in appendices to this letter.

Yours sincerely

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Addresses

For action

NHS Board Chief Executives
NHS Board Directors of Public Health
NHS Board Medical Directors
NHS Board Nursing Directors
NHS Board Directors of Pharmacy
NHS Boards Resilience
NHS Boards Emergency Planning
Consultants in Public Health Medicine
General Practitioners
Practice Nurses
Community Pharmacists
Infectious Disease Consultants
Regional Resilience Partnerships
Resilience Forum
Local Authority Environmental Health
Officers
Local Authority Directors of Education
Scottish Council of Independent Schools
Care Inspectorate
Local Authority Directors of Social
Services
Local Authority Emergency Planning
Scottish Prison Service
NHS 24

For information

Chief Nursing Officer
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Chairs, NHS Boards

APPENDIX 1: SAFE SUMMER IN SCOTLAND INFORMATION LINKS

Main Portals for public information on Safe Summer in Scotland:

NHS Inform - <http://www.nhsinform.co.uk>

Ready Scotland - <http://www.readyscotland.org>

Weather:

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| Free 5 day forecast | http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/glasgow-glasgow#?tab=fiveDay |
| Free mobile forecast | http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/services/weather |

Heat and Sun Safety:

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| Safe in the Sun | http://sunsmart.org.uk |
| | http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/sun-exposure.aspx |
| Vitamin D | http://sunsmart.org.uk/UV-the-sun-and-skin-cancer/vitamin-d/ |
| Air Quality | http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk/know-and-respond/ |
| Patient information leaflet by Age UK – ‘Staying Cool in a Heatwave’ | http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Information-guides/AgeUKIL1_staying_cool_in_a_heatwave_inf.pdf?dtrk=true |
| Pollen forecast | http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/health/public/pollen-forecast#calendar |

Outdoor Hazards:

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| Hill Walking and Mountain Climbing | http://www.mcofs.org.uk/mountain-safety.asp |
| Outdoor Swimming Advice | http://www.rospa.com/fags/detail.aspx?faq=300 |
| | http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/health-library/articles/s/stings-marine-creatures/introduction.aspx |
| Garden Safety – General Hygiene and Safety Advice while using Compost | http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/news/newsdetailtemp.aspx?id=638 |
| Ticks and Lyme Disease | http://www.documents.hps.scot.nhs.uk/giz/general/tick-factsheet-2009-04.pdf |
| | http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/Health-Library/Articles/L/lyme-disease/introduction |
| | https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-publishes-new-tick-leaflets-to-remind-people-to-be-tick-aware |

Food and Animal Attraction Hazards:

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|---------------------|---|---|
| Hand Hygiene Advice | Health Protection Scotland Guidance on How to Wash Your Hands | http://washyourhandsofthem.com/hand-hygiene--you/how-to-wash-your-hands.aspx |
| E. Coli 0157 | Public facing leaflet on reducing risk from rural visits | http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0012529.pdf |
| Campylobacter | Don't Wash Raw Chicken Food Safety Week 2014 | www.food.gov.uk/chicken |

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| Food Safety | Public Information | http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/Health-Library/Articles/F/food-safety/introduction |
| | | http://www.food.gov.uk/scotland/news-updates/news/2013/jul/bbq |
| | | http://food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2011/nov/vegcampaign |

Travel:

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| Information on a Range of Health and Travel Related Topics | http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/ |
| | http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx |
| | http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice.aspx#disease-prevention-advice |
| | http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/news.aspx |
| Summer Safety for Children | http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/disease-prevention-advice/sexually-transmitted-and-blood-borne-infections.aspx |
| | http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Pages/Childsafety.aspx |

Festivals:

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| Festival Survival: | http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Festivalhealth/Pages/Survivalguide.aspx |
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Resources for Health and Social Care and Environmental Health Professionals:

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| Heat and Sun Safety | Health and Social Care Professionals | Appendix 2 |
| Ticks | Health Professionals Tick Leaflets (PHE Documents). | http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1317138937172 |
| | Maps of Tick Distribution | http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/vectors/vector-maps/Pages/VBORNET-maps-tick-species.aspx |
| <i>E. Coli</i> 0157 | Public Health Guidance for Management of VTEC: GPs, Public Health and Health Protection, Microbiologists, EHOs, Infection Control. | http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/giz/guidelinesetail.aspx?id=39336 |
| Animal Attractions | Code of Practice for Owners, Operators and Managers of Animal Attractions. | http://www.face-online.org.uk/CodeofPractice |
| | Enforcement Officers Guidance. | http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sims/aq_food/011102/index.htm |
| | Guidance for Organisers of camping or picnic trips to land used for grazing and for owners of this land. | http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47102/0013825.pdf |
| Blue Green Algae | Guidance for public health and environmental health. | http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/04/6625/0 |

APPENDIX 2: Heat and Sun Safety: Heat Health Effects and Medications Information for Health and Social Care Professionals^{1,2}

Background:

The Climate Change Risk assessment for Scotland predicts that morbidity and mortality from summer temperatures will be a medium risk by the 2050s. While current risk could be deemed low, it is very likely that heat health effects will be seen at lower thresholds than further south. Temperatures in excess of 25°C are associated with excess summer deaths, with higher temperatures associated with greater numbers of excess deaths³.

There is strong evidence that heat has an impact on health and that deaths can be prevented by taking simple precautions. The mortality increase as a result of very warm weather follows within 1-2 days of the temperature rising, so advanced preparation and knowledge of effective actions to take for individuals, health and social care professionals and carers, are key to reducing heat related health risks. Health and Social Care professionals are well placed to identify those who are most vulnerable to heat health effects and who may need extra support in following health protective advice.

Risk Factors Predisposing to Adverse Heat Health Effects:

- **Elderly – even those who do not regard themselves ‘at risk’**
- **Females over 75 years of age**
- **Chronic conditions including diabetes, cardiorespiratory conditions, psychoses, dementia, substance misuse disorders, renal impairment, obesity.**
- **Infants**
- **Institutionalized – particularly nursing, residential and care homes.**
- **Socially isolated**
- **Any condition with a level of dependence on others**
- **Taking Medications – see below**
- **Gram negative septicaemia**
- **Homelessness**
- **Environmental factors e.g. Densely populated Urban areas, top flats/south facing aspects**

Thermoregulation:

The body usually cools itself by a combination of:

- Radiation
- Convection via water or air crossing the skin
- Conduction of heat away by a cooler object in contact with the skin
- Evaporation of sweat.

If the ambient temperature is higher than body temperature, the only cooling mechanism the body has is sweating. The body's ability to sweat may be compromised by tight clothing, certain medications, dehydration and lack of breeze and this will cause the body to overheat. Thermoregulation is controlled by the hypothalamus, which may be impaired in the elderly and chronically ill; young children have reduced ability to sweat, yet produce a lot of metabolic heat and so these group are at greater risk of overheating.

¹ <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/clinical-resources/~/media/Files/CIRC/Clinical%20Priorities/RCGP-Heatwave-plan-2013.ashx>

² <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Documents/heatwave-plan-supporting-vulnerable-people-advice-health-social-care-professionals.pdf>

³ Heatwave Plan for England 2013. Making the Case: the impact of heat on health. PHE 2013.

Cardiovascular and respiratory disease are the main causes of illness and deaths during heatwaves and may be exacerbated by poor Air Quality (e.g. ground-level ozone and particulates such as PM2.5 and PM10). [Know and Respond Scotland](#), a free service, provides subscribers with text message alerts when air pollution is predicted to be moderate, high or severe. Texts are accompanied by health advice. The service is of particular benefit to those with medical conditions exacerbated by air pollution, such as respiratory or cardiac conditions.

Specific heat health effects include:

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|-------------------------|--|
| Heat Cramp | A result of dehydration and electrolyte depletion |
| Heat Rash | Small, red itchy papules |
| Heat Oedema | Vasodilation and fluid retention may result in ankle oedema |
| Heat Syncope: | Dizziness and fainting due to a combination of dehydration, vasodilation, cardiovascular disease and certain medications. |
| Heat exhaustion: | Water or sodium depletion result in non-specific malaise, vomiting, low blood pressure and circulatory collapse. Core temperature is between 37-40°C. Treatment: Stop physical activity, rehydrate with fluid and electrolytes. |
| Heat Stroke: | Progression of heat exhaustion may lead to failure of thermoregulation. Symptoms: confusion, disorientation, unconsciousness, seizures. Signs: Core temperature over 40°C, hot dry skin Treatment: Medical emergency, requiring fluid resuscitation and active cooling of the body. |

Preparation in Health and Social Care: The principles behind the core [health protective messages](#) apply in all settings, at home, in institutions and in hospital.

- **Look after yourself and keep in touch with others.** Support those requiring assistance to follow health protective advice. Extra care and support may be required.
- **Keep Yourself/Clients Cool.** Ensure good hydration – taking medical advice if a patient/client is on fluid restriction. Provide plenty cool drinks. Use cool baths, showers or body washes to cool down and consider sprinkling water over clothing or skin, or using a damp cloth on the back of the neck. Avoid extreme physical exertion. Ensure clients have light, loose fitting clothing in advance of summertime.
- **Keep Yourself/Your clients Environment cool.** Facilitate clients to follow health protective advice. Move clients to cooler rooms, turn off non-essential electrical equipment, shade external windows, shade south facing windows with pale reflective linings.
- **Stay out/Keep clients out of the heat.** Avoid the sun between 11am and 3pm and if you or your client has to go out, stay in the shade. If outdoors, use protective sunscreen of at least SPF 15. Encourage clients to wear hat, sunglasses and light coloured loose fitting clothes (preferably cotton)

Reminding people to visit frail family members or neighbours to assist them in following health protective advice provides an informal and important support network.

Opportunities to educate patients, clients and carers about health protective advice, and that medication adaptation may be required should be taken.

Patient Information: Safe Summer messages are available on www.nhsinform.co.uk

Medications: Medical practitioners may wish to consider altering medication for the period of heatwave (for example stopping diuretics, or reducing anti-cholinergic drugs) in some individuals. In the event of a prolonged episode of hot weather the body will acclimatise, sweating more readily and becoming more efficient at thermoregulation, this process can take several weeks; caution should be used if medication which alters the body's ability to thermoregulate is initiated during these conditions.

Medications that Increase Risk of Adverse Heat Health Effects include:

| Medication | Mechanism |
|--|---|
| Anti-cholinergics | Can effect central thermoregulation, reduce cognitive alertness and prevent or reduce sweating (many drugs below have anti-cholinergic effects) |
| Antipsychotics | Can inhibit sweating mechanism, and reduce systolic BP, central thermoregulation, alertness and vasodilatation |
| Antihistamines | Can inhibit the sweating mechanism, and reduce systolic BP |
| Anti-parkinsonian agents | Can inhibit the sweating mechanism reduce systolic BP, and cause dizziness and confusion |
| Antidepressants | Altered sweating, some can decrease centrally induced thermoregulation and cognitive alertness |
| Anxiolytics and muscle relaxants | Reduce sweating and increase dizziness, decrease cardiac output and therefore reduce cooling by vasodilatation and worsen respiratory symptoms |
| Anti-adrenergics and beta-blockers | Can prevent dilation of the blood vessels in the skin, reducing the capacity to dissipate heat by convection |
| Sympathomimetics | Vasodilators, including nitrates and calcium channel blockers, can worsen hypotension in vulnerable patients |
| Antihypertensives and diuretics | Can lead to dehydration and reduced blood pressure; hyponatraemia is a common side effect and can be worsened by excess fluid intake |
| Antiepileptics, | Can reduce cognitive alertness and increase dizziness |
| Antiemetics, anti-vertigo, gastrointestinal, and urinary incontinence drugs | Anti-cholinergic effects |

Business continuity:

- Safe Storage of medicines by patients and practices when temperatures are raised should be considered.
- Computer equipment may be adversely affected by extreme temperature and consideration should be given to active cooling of servers by opening doors and through ventilation with windows and fans.

APPENDIX 3: Heat and Sun Safety: Further Information for Schools and Early Years⁴

During hot weather health protective advice should be followed to prevent children suffering from heat stress and heat exhaustion. The following information may be helpful for those looking after children in schools and early years settings, including teachers, school nurses, classroom assistants, nursery nurses and childminders.

Look after yourself and others: Any dependent group may be at risk from heat health effects and will require assistance to follow health protection advice. Children under 4 years, those with complex health needs, overweight children and those on certain medications are at particular risk from the heat.

Keep Cool:

- **Drink plenty cool fluids:** Children should be encouraged to drink plenty of cool water, which should be readily available.

Keep the Environment Cool:

- Open windows in the cool early morning and overnight if safety/security/insurance allow.
- Windows should not be closed but openings reduced when outdoor air is warmer than indoors, to keep rooms cool while allowing ventilation.
- Use outdoor sun awnings if available or indoor blinds, but don't block ventilation or windows
- Keep use of electric lighting and devices to minimum as they generate heat.

Stay out of the Heat:

- On hot days over 30°C, children should not take part in vigorous physical activity.
- Children playing outdoors should be encouraged to stay in the shade.
- Loose, light coloured clothing and hats with wide brims should be worn.
- Wear thin clothing or sun cream (of at least SPF 15) to protect skin if playing outdoors for more than 20 minutes.

Conditions related to heat waves such as **heatstroke and heat exhaustion** can have serious consequences if not quickly treated: <http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/Health-Library/Articles/H/heat-exhaustion-and-heatstroke/treatment>

Sun Protection School Policy Guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/schools/schoolpolicyguidelines/sun-protection-school-policy-guidelines>

⁴ http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/EmergencyResponse/ExtremeWeatherEventsAndNaturalDisasters/Heatwaves/heatwaves_teachers/

APPENDIX 4: Mass Gatherings Heat Health Protection Advice⁵

As part of the risk assessment and management process for Mass Gathering Events, organisers may wish to consider the risk of Extreme Weather Events.

Changes in behaviour of individuals attending mass gatherings, such as reduced fluid intake, may increase susceptibility to heat health effects. The following guidance relates specifically to avoidance measures for heat health risks.

Organisers should consider the following:

- Provide temporary shaded areas at event locations (umbrellas/tents)
- Reduce need for queuing
- Provide water spray/mist to cool down
- Provide a map of air conditioned/cool public spaces to cool down
- Divert strenuous activities to cooler days
- Ensure good access to water and free provision on hot days
- In extreme heat consider changing date, location or cancelling the event.
- Ensure adequate provision of first aid/emergency treatment centres and good transport to these
- Advise catering to ensure the availability of water rich foods e.g. salad and yoghurts at venues (ensuring these are kept cool to avoid contamination)
- Consider sponsorship for free sunscreen
- Provide guidance on heat health effects to first aiders and ensure they are aware of vulnerable groups, e.g. the elderly, children and those with chronic cardiac and respiratory conditions
- Reduce alcohol harms through licensing and enforcement as consumption of alcohol may worsen heat health effects

In addition, as heat health effects may be exacerbated by poor air quality, organisers should take steps to minimise air pollution and signpost the [Know and Respond](#) website, a free service, which provides subscribers with text message alerts and health advice when air pollution is predicted to be moderate, high or severe.

⁵Murray V. Extreme Events and Mass Gatherings. McCluskey B and Endericks T, Editors. Learning from London 2012. A practical guide to public health and mass gatherings. http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1317138422305 (accessed 21st April 2014)