



# Sun/Heat Protection Policy

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Children's susceptibility to high temperatures varies; those under 4 years of age, who are overweight, or who are taking certain medication may be at increased risk of adverse effects. Some children with disabilities or complex health needs may be more susceptible to high temperatures. The school nurse, community health practitioner, family health visitor or the child's specialist health professional may be able to advise on the particular needs of the individual child. Support staff should be made aware of the risks and how to manage them.

### **Health risks from heat**

Children cannot control their body temperature as efficiently as adults during hot weather because they do not sweat as much and so can be at risk of ill-health from heat. Heat-related illness can range from mild heat stress to potentially life-threatening heatstroke. The main risk from heat is dehydration (not having enough water in the body). If sensible precautions are taken children are unlikely to be adversely affected by hot conditions, however, all staff working with children in hot conditions should look out for signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

### **Heat stress**

Children suffering from heat stress may seem out of character or show signs of discomfort and irritability (including those listed below for heat exhaustion). These signs will worsen with physical activity and if left untreated can lead to heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

### **Heat exhaustion**

Symptoms of heat exhaustion vary but include one or more of the following:

- tiredness
- dizziness
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting
- hot, red and dry skin
- confusion

### **Heatstroke**

When the body is exposed to very high temperatures, the mechanism that controls body temperature may stop working. Heatstroke can develop if heat stress or heat exhaustion is left untreated, but it can also occur suddenly and without warning.

Symptoms of heatstroke may include:

- high body temperature - a temperature of or above 40°C (104°F) is a major sign of heatstroke
- red, hot skin and sweating that then suddenly stops
- fast heartbeat
- fast shallow breathing
- confusion/lack of co-ordination
- fits
- loss of consciousness

### **Actions to protect children suffering from heat illness**

The following steps to reduce body temperature should be taken immediately:

- Move the child to as cool a room as possible and encourage them to drink cool water (such as water from a cold tap).
- Cool the child as rapidly as possible, using whatever methods you can. For example, sponge or spray the child with cool (25 to 30°C) water - if available, place cold packs around the neck and armpits, or wrap the child in a cool, wet sheet and assist cooling with a fan.
- Dial 999 to request an ambulance if the person doesn't respond to the above treatment within 30 minutes.

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If a child loses consciousness, or has a fit, place the child in the recovery position, call 999 immediately and follow the steps above until medical assistance arrives.

### Protecting children outdoors

During periods of high temperature, the following steps should be taken:

- children should not take part in vigorous physical activity on very hot days
- encourage children playing outdoors to stay in the shade as much as possible
- children should wear loose, light-coloured clothing to help keep cool and sunhats with wide brims to avoid sunburn – This does not have to be in line with our school uniform policy.
  - You may need to ‘tell’ some children (particularly young children and children with SEND) directly what to do – eg. ‘take off your jumper’ or ‘put on your hat’
- use sunscreen (at least factor 15 with UVA protection) to protect skin if children are playing or taking lessons outdoors for more than 20 minutes
  - See *Personal and Intimate Care Policy* for guidance on application of sunscreen (as with application of any other cream)
  - Children bringing sunscreen to school should have it labelled with their name on and kept in a place where they can access it
  - School sunscreen is available if needed
  - Always consider pupil allergies and skin conditions
- provide children with plenty of water (such as water from a cold tap) and encourage them to drink more than usual when conditions are hot
  - ALL pupils should have an accessible school water bottle with them that is refilled on a daily basis

### Protecting children indoors

During periods of high temperature, the following steps should be taken:

- open windows as early as possible in the morning before children arrive
- almost close windows when the outdoor air becomes warmer than the air indoors – this should help keep the heat out while allowing adequate ventilation
- use outdoor sun awnings if available, or close indoor blinds or curtains, but do not let them block window ventilation
- keep the use of electric lighting to a minimum
- switch off all electrical equipment, including computers, monitors and printers when not in use – equipment should not be left in ‘standby mode’ as this generates heat
- if possible, use those classrooms or other spaces which are less likely to overheat, and adjust the layout of teaching spaces to avoid direct sunlight on children
- oscillating mechanical fans can be used to increase air movement if temperatures are below 35°C – at temperatures above 35°C fans may not prevent heat-related illness and may worsen dehydration
- if necessary, consider rearranging school start, finish, and play times to avoid teaching during very hot conditions
- encourage children to eat normally and drink plenty of cool water

### Look After Yourself

During periods of hot weather, it is essential that you look after your own health to enable you to look after the health of others. Follow the steps above in respect of yourself; take breaks and drink plenty of water.