During hot weather, it is difficult for your body to maintain its normal temperature. Hot weather makes it difficult for your body's cooling system to work effectively. As your body temperature rises, you may begin to feel the effects of heat stress.

Heat stress can be a risk your health.

Heat can worsen existing medical conditions, such as heart and kidney disease, asthma and other breathing conditions, or gastro.

Heat can adversely affect the health of pregnant or breastfeeding women and children, people with alcohol or drug issues, people taking certain medications, such as medication for mental illnesses.

Heat can also affect people who are generally in good health. Older people are at most risk from the effects of heat, many older people die during a heatwave.

You need to be aware of the symptoms of heat stress, so you can identify when you need to take action to improve your health during hot weather. Heat stress can happen to anyone, regardless of whether you are in good health or not.

Early symptoms of heat stress include sweating and thirst, which may indicate dehydration. You may feel tired, weak or restless. You may lose your appetite, and your skin may feel damp and clammy. Muscle cramps, heat rash and nausea may also occur. If you experience these symptoms during hot weather, you need to drink more water.

Take a cool (not cold) shower or bath. Avoid salty foods. You can drink glucose if necessary, but if fluid intake is limited for medical reasons, remember to check with your doctor first.

Avoid tight clothing as loose clothing will keep you cooler. Dampen a towel with water and use it to cool down your shoulders, arms and face.

If your house is too hot, go somewhere with air conditioning such as the cinema or a shopping mall,

where you can cool down.

If you ignore these early signs of heat stress, you may be at risk from heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

These are serious medical conditions.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include a pale face, excessive sweating and rapid pulse. You may experience muscle cramps, headaches and vomiting, in addition to feeling dizzy or even fainting.

If you experience these symptoms, you need to lie down in a cool area with your legs raised.

Remove any outer layers of clothing.

Dampen a towel and use it to cool down your shoulders, neck and face.

Drink more water.

Keep an eye on your health condition to make sure it does not worsen.

If necessary, seek medical assistance from your doctor or from NURSE-ON-CALL. You can use the National Relay Service to seek medical assistance.

If you ignore these symptoms, you may be at risk from heat stroke.

Heat stroke occurs when your body temperature exceeds 40.5 degrees. At this temperature, vital organs such as heart and kidneys will begin to shut down. Heat stroke can cause seizure or coma.

The symptoms of heat stroke are similar to heat exhaustion, along with stumbling, disorientation and confusion. The person may suffer a seizure or fall into a coma.

You must call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

Move the person to a cool area and lie them down.

Wait with them until an ambulance arrives.

Remove any outer layers of clothing and help cool their skin with a damp cloth while fanning them.

Do not offer any fluids.

If the person falls unconscious, roll them into the recovery position.

Clear their airways and ensure they can breathe.

It may be difficult to remember all this information, so it is a good idea to download the Better Health Channel app. This contains plenty of information about health, but remember it does not replace medical attention.

Ensure you and your family are aware of the symptoms of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, so you can improve your condition quickly if necessary.

Your health is important.