

Healthy Living

Hot Weather



There is no doubt that most of us all love the warmer weather, however as early years practitioners, it is extremely important that we are aware of the risks hot weather poses to children in the early years.

A report on climate extremes in the UK, found that in recent years we have been experiencing higher temperatures and longer warmer spells. Younger children find it harder to control their body temperature and to stay cool, which means they can be at an increased risk of heat-related illness. Below is a list of risks associated with rising temperatures:

- Dehydration
- Heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Sunburn
- Overheating
- Heat rash.
- Fatigue and irritability
- Reduced appetite and nutrient intake
- Exacerbation of existing health conditions

TASK 1

Within your team discuss and answer the questions below:

- What signs might you observe in a child suffering from any of the issues listed above?
- What current measures do you have in place to prevent this from happening?

TASK 2

It is crucial that settings risk assess and have preventive measures in place to keep all children safe in hot weather. Reflect on the list below and discuss ways on how you can further improve protecting children from heat related illness:

- **Closely monitor weather conditions**

By keeping up to date with the local weather forecasts, especially regarding heatwaves, you can use this information to guide your decisions on outdoor activities and inform parents of any necessary precautions.

- **Hydration**

Children require regular access to water throughout the day. Practitioners should encourage frequent drinking and monitor this closely. Do you provide a water station outside so it's available for the children to access at any time? How do you keep it cool?

- **Appropriate clothing**

Parents may require reminders of what children should wear in hot weather, such as loose-fitting, & lightweight clothes to help keep them cool. Do you ensure each child wears a sun hat when they play outside in the hot weather?

- **Sun protection**

Parents and staff may need reminders and information of the damage UVA rays can have on a child's skin. Encourage parents to apply sunscreen on their child before they arrive each day. Do you ask parents to provide their child with a labelled bottle of sunscreen to keep at the setting? Outdoor areas should have shaded spaces, such as under trees or a gazebo to protect them from direct sun exposure. How do you ensure you provide the children with enough shade when they are outside in hot weather?

- **Timing outdoor activities well**

Avoid outdoor activities during the hottest parts of the day. Plan and schedule outdoor play in the early morning or late afternoons when the weather should be cooler.

- **Environmental control**

How do you ensure indoor areas are kept cool and well-ventilated? Consider the use of air conditioning or fans, (be mindful of the safety of fans around children). Create 'cool down' areas where children can rest and recover if they feel too hot.

- **Recognising symptoms and first aid**

Ensure all staff can identify the signs of heat and sun related illness in children. Do you have a clear plan for responding to heat related emergencies, including procedures for cooling down a child quickly and contacting medical services if necessary?

TASK 3

Watch the lullaby trust video on baby summer safety, click on: [Baby summer safety - The Lullaby Trust](#)

Now, with your team reflect and discuss the measures you have in place to ensure babies in your care do not overheat in hot weather? What improvements can you make?

Further reading and useful links:

- [EYI-GDE12.66 Keeping children safe during hot weather .pdf \(tusla.ie\)](#)
- [Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during hot weather: teachers and other educational professionals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [How to be sun safe | early years alliance \(eyalliance.org.uk\)](#)
- [Sun safety for children in early years - NDNA](#)
- [Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during hot weather: teachers and other educational professionals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [UK Heatwave: Tackling myths around darker skin and SPF - BBC News](#)