



Warm Weather

Policy and Procedure

Notice to employees using a paper copy of this policy
The company Policies folder on the shared drive holds the most recent version of this document and all employees must ensure that they are using the most recent guidance.

Document Control

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Version Control

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Contents

Subject	Page Number
Introduction	4
Signs and symptoms of the effects of warm weather	4
Clients at risk	4
Action Plan	4
Daily activities in and out of the home	5
Food preparation	5
Seeking Advice	5

Introduction

Libertatem Healthcare Group recognises it owes a duty of care to protect its clients against the effects of hot weather both inside and outside of their home. Its aim is to use reasonable endeavours to ensure the wellbeing of the clients during spells of hot weather. Severe heat is dangerous to everyone, particularly older people and those with long term medical conditions.

Signs and symptoms of the effects of warm weather

- Heat rash presents as areas of small, red, itchy papules.
- Heat oedema occurs mainly in the ankles, due to vasodilation and retention of fluid.
- Heat syncope can cause dizziness and fainting due to dehydration, vasodilation, cardiovascular disease and certain medications.
- Heat exhaustion is more common, and it can occur as a result of water or sodium depletion, and can have non-specific features of malaise, such as vomiting and circulatory collapse, and is present when the core temperature is between 37°C and 40°C. Left untreated, heat exhaustion may evolve into heatstroke.
- Heatstroke can become a point of no return if the body's thermoregulation mechanism fails. This leads to a medical emergency, with symptoms of confusion, disorientation, convulsions, unconsciousness, hot dry skin, and a core body temperature exceeding 40°C for between 45 minutes and eight hours. It can result in cell death, organ failure, brain damage or death.

Clients at Risk

1. All elderly persons particularly over the age of 75yrs old.
2. Clients with chronic and severe illness, including heart conditions, diabetes, respiratory or renal insufficiency, Parkinson's disease, or severe mental illness;
3. Clients who are prescribed medications which can potentially affect renal function, sweating, thermoregulation or electrolyte balance.
4. Clients who have Alzheimer's disease, disabilities, or who are bed bound.

Action Plan

Support workers should encourage clients to wear light loose fitting clothing, and if outside the clients will be encouraged to wear a hat and to sit in the shade. Sun block creams are advised for both our clients and support workers when undertaking any activities outside, Sunglasses are advised to protect the people from the glare of the sun.

Libertatem Healthcare Group is aware that in hot temperatures there is an increased risk of dehydration to its individuals. Support workers should use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that clients they are supporting are adequately hydrated, and also ensure this for themselves. Fluids should be readily available and accessible to clients, throughout the day and night.

Clients who need assistance to ensure they have an adequate fluid intake will have this as a matter of priority. Where necessary, fluid balance charts will be used to monitor fluid intake. Support workers should seek advice from the clinical nurse about additional fluids if they are concerned.

In hot temperatures there is an added risk to clients who have respiratory or cardiovascular diseases. In the heat air pollution can affect people with respiratory problems. The effect of heat can also put a strain on the heart. Support workers should endeavour to keep any affected client in a cool area of the home and use air conditioning or fans to try and keep the area in which they are located as cool as possible.

Windows and curtains may be closed during the day, if that is the better thing to do, and kept open at night to allow cooler air to circulate throughout the home.

Sweating and dehydration can affect the electrolyte balance of individuals at risk. People who are taking medication to control their electrolyte balance and heart condition can be at greater risk in the heat. For any such person, support workers with concerns, should take advice from the client's GP.

Daily activities in and out of the Home

In the event of hot weather the daily activities of people we support may need to be varied or cancelled, particularly if it is thought these activities might increase the risks to the client. If there is a planned excursion, and it is considered the weather is too hot for the client to travel in comfort and without risk, the trip should be cancelled or postponed to a later date.

Food Preparation

All staff should be aware that when the weather is hot, bacteria on food can multiply very quickly, which can in turn increase the risk of food poisoning. Support workers involved in preparation of client food will support the client to ensure that food, where required, will be stored in the fridge. Food will be kept out of the sun and will be kept out of the fridge for the shortest time possible and for no more than a couple of hours

Seeking Advice

If you have concerns that a client you are supporting is suffering and becoming unwell due to the effects from the heat, please do call the clinical team for advice and support on 0118 9730006 or call the clients GP or 111.

If the client becomes acutely unwell and you need immediate assistance and support please dial 999 and request the ambulance service.

Document very clearly in the daily record any advice sought, and make note of who has provided the advice and the actions that you have been asked to undertake and the effectiveness of the actions.