

CLINICAL ALERT

Quality and
Safety

Alert No: 6

Date: 23/06/26

Clinical Alert: Heatwave Safety Guidance

Dear Colleague,

Temperatures are expected to remain very high this week, with heat alerts rising from amber to red. Your wellbeing whilst working in the heat is a priority. Please read the guidance for colleagues on the [Intranet here](#). Thank you for continuing to care for our vulnerable patients over this period.

Please find below guidance for keeping our patients safe in the heat working across all our services.

Many of our patient groups are particularly vulnerable including:

- People with severe mental illness, dementia, substance use and intellectual disabilities
- People taking psychotropic medications
- Individuals with physical health conditions such as cardiovascular or renal conditions which can put them at higher risk of heat-related illness like heat exhaustion or heat stroke
- People who are homeless, elderly, socially isolated or in care homes
- Young children or children with health conditions
- Anyone cared for or living in conditions which limit access to ventilation and hydration support.

Heat-related symptoms and illness can escalate quickly – from discomfort to heat exhaustion, which, if untreated, can progress to life-threatening heatstroke.

Heat and Medication.

A wide variety of medicines, particularly those used to treat serious mental illness, can affect the body's temperature regulation and or elimination of heat. You can learn more about the symptoms and immediate management of heat stroke and exhaustion [here](#).

Antipsychotics, antihistamines (such as promethazine), anticholinergic drugs (such as procyclidine) and serotonergic drugs (antidepressants such as sertraline, fluoxetine or citalopram) have all been linked with increasing the risk of heat related illnesses such as dehydration, hyperthermia or heat stroke, resulting in hospitalisation.

It is essential during periods of extreme heat that individuals receiving medication that may impact the body's heat regulation, especially those psychotropic medicines, are warned about the impacts on the body's heat regulation and if an in-patient attentive monitoring is undertaken.

Individuals who are taking lithium should avoid becoming dehydrated, as this will increase their lithium blood level, potentially causing dangerous lithium toxicity.

It is important to communicate with patients about the additional risks posed by their medications, in relation to the heat, and support them to manage the risks.

Resources

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has issued guidance for staff on managing mental health patients and services during heatwaves: [heatwaves-guidance.pdf](#)

Staff can also make use of this heat-health action card provided by the UK Health Security Agency for healthcare providers: [Action card summary poster - healthcare](#)

Key takeaways

1. Please take measures to keep yourself, your colleagues and your patients safe in the heat.
2. Assess your services, identify those who are particularly vulnerable and take any steps possible to manage the heat.
3. Where possible communicate directly with patients about the potential risks, especially related to medication and heat, and support them with practical steps. Advice for patients on how to manage the heat is available here both in full and in easy-read format: [Beat the heat: hot weather advice - GOV.UK](#)

For general guidance around the heatwave and to read ELFT's heatwave plan, [click here](#).



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