



HEAT AND CHILDREN

INFORMATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF BABIES AND TODDLERS

WHY BABIES AND TODDLERS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE

- The **delicate skin** of babies and toddlers is very sensitive to the sun and burns easily.
- Babies and toddlers struggle to adjust to heat because **their sweat production** is lower and less well regulated.
- Since their bodies burn energy faster than older children or adults due to a **higher metabolic rate** they generate more heat while playing.
- Even on days that feel comfortable for you, your little ones could **already be overheating**.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Heat stress can quickly turn into heat exhaustion in children, especially if your child is very physically active or dressed too warmly. The best way to check if your child is too warm is to feel the area between their shoulder blades. If it feels sweaty, the child is too warm and should be cooled down (e.g., with wet compresses, more drinking, or a change of location). Due to the increased sweating during heat exhaustion, the body loses not only fluids but also minerals.

Heat Exhaustion

You can recognize heat exhaustion by the following signs:

- Heavy sweating or chills with pale, cold-sweaty skin
- Reddened face
- Dry lips
- Fatigue and lack of concentration
- Headaches and dizziness
- Heat cramps in arms and legs

If these symptoms are not treated, heat exhaustion can lead to **life-threatening heatstroke**.

Heatstroke

Heatstroke is characterized by:

- Fever
- Hot, red skin that does not feel sweaty (later the skin turns gray-blueish)
- Severe headaches
- Impaired consciousness, cramps, and possibly unconsciousness

Heatstroke is a **medical emergency** and the **emergency services (112)** should be contacted as soon as possible. In the meantime, try to gently cool the child down.

Sunstroke

Children can suffer from sunstroke if their head and neck are exposed to the sun without protection. The following symptoms often occur:

- Bright red and hot head (the rest of the body feels normal)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headaches
- Neck pain
- Possible circulatory problems and unconsciousness

When your child displays these symptoms, it is important to cool them down immediately and seek medical advice.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM HEAT AND SUN

Keep your little ones hydrated

Children aged 1 to 7 years should consume about three-quarters to one liter of fluids daily. This can be even more when it's hot. Offer them cool (not cold) drinks like mineral or tap water, diluted fruit spritzers, or unsweetened fruit and herbal teas. Children might forget thirst while playing, so offer them drinks frequently. For breastfed babies, breast milk is sufficient even on hot days. However, make sure you stay well-hydrated yourself and offer the breast more often to ensure your baby gets the fluids they need.

Offer light and fresh food

Several small and light meals with a high water content are ideal. Fruit, vegetables and soups are great. For example, melons and cucumbers have a water content of over 90%.

Avoid direct sunlight

Babies up to one year should never be exposed to direct sunlight. Toddlers up to the age of four should avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. During those hours, let the children play in the shade or indoors. Plan outdoor activities for the cooler morning and evening hours.

Ensure adequate sun protection

Protect your little ones even in the shade with a hat with a brim, sunglasses (UV-400) and sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 30 (applied half an hour beforehand). Reapply sunscreen (even waterproof products) after playing with water (note, this does not extend the sun protection factor of the sunscreen, it is only maintained). For very young children and their sensitive skin, it is preferable to protect them with clothing and shade than to apply sunscreen. Sun- and heat-appropriate clothing is light, loose and breathable (cotton, viscose, etc.).

Plan for water games

Your child can playfully cool down with water games in the shade. Some examples are water playgrounds, a garden shower, a bowl of water for the balcony, or a paddling pool. Never leave your child unattended!

Keep your home cool

Ideally, the room temperature should not exceed 26°C. For optimal cooling, air out the apartment in the mornings, evenings or at night when the outside temperature is cooler. However, cross-ventilation during the day can also reduce high humidity in the apartment. During the day, cover your windows with blinds or curtains. The use of fans can also help, but pay attention to what feels good and do not point the fan directly at your child.

Adjust sleepwear

Nighttime overheating of your little ones should absolutely be avoided. Use light bed linen (e.g. a light cotton sheet) or a light, sleeveless summer sleeping sack. Sleepwear should also be thin and airy in hot weather.

Never leave your child in a parked car

In the summer months, it often takes only 10 minutes for the interior temperature of parked vehicles to heat up to over 40°C. Therefore, never leave your little ones in the car (even for a short time), this can quickly become life-threatening!

Get informed about upcoming heat waves

It is best to prepare for the heat if you are well informed. You can do this by checking the regional weather report or requesting the automatic email notification for heat warnings from the German Weather Service (DWD).

Remember, your little ones can't protect themselves from the heat and sun. You are their best defense.

More information under www.berlin.de/hitzeschutz-nk

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