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## Doctors sound summer siren for Queensland elderly

Doctors are urging Queenslanders to take special care of elderly friends and relatives this summer with high daytime temperatures posing serious health risks for people over 65 years.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia warned that elderly people who lived alone and had chronic illnesses were most at risk of heat stress.

“Extreme heat contributes to the death of more than 1000 people aged over 65 in Australia ever year,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“Heat stress affects older people more than others. When we age, our bodies are not as good at maintaining a healthy temperature and certain medications can also inhibit the body from sweating which is how we cool ourselves down.”

Dr Dhupelia said daytime temperatures of 30C and above posed risks for elderly people.

“Symptoms of heat stress can range from rashes, muscle cramps and hot, dry skin to vomiting, confusion and life-threatening conditions such as heatstroke,” he said.

“We are calling on Queenslanders to check in on their elderly neighbours, friends and relatives and to help them stay as cool as possible over summer.”

### **Top tips for avoiding heat stress in elderly people:**

- Ask for a copy of their patient information. This should include contact details for their doctors and next of kin as well as a list of their medical conditions and medications. Beta blockers, diuretics, antidepressants, antihistamines and sedatives can all increase the risk of heat stress.
- Check on them frequently. Look for hot and dry skin, dizziness, headaches or cramps.
- If they don't have air conditioning at home, take them to a shopping centre or library for respite from the heat. Alternatively, use wet towels in front of an electric fan to help them stay cool.
- Make sure their home has adequate ventilation. Electric fans create air movement that can help the body to cool.
- Pay attention to weather forecasts with temperatures above 37C particularly dangerous.
- Limit tea, coffee and alcohol in extreme heat. They have a diuretic effect.
- Try to drink at two litres of water every day.

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