

# **Heat & COVID 19**

## **Amplifying the Heat Risk Impact**

**Madhab Uprety**

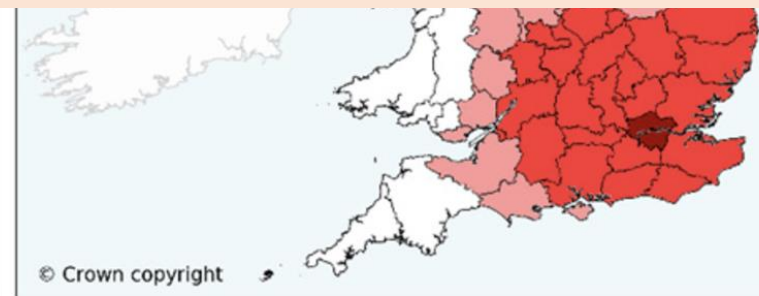
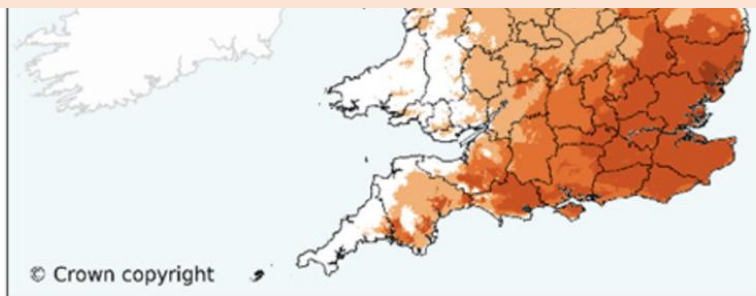
Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

# Heatwaves in England in 2020?



**2,556 excess deaths**

“Cumulative excess all-cause mortality related to heatwaves in summer 2020 was the **highest observed** since the introduction of the Heatwave Plan for England. . . the severity and intensity of the heatwave alone **does not fully explain the magnitude of the impacts observed**. Further work is required to explore how the concurrent risk of COVID-19 and heatwaves may have intersected to amplify these impacts.”



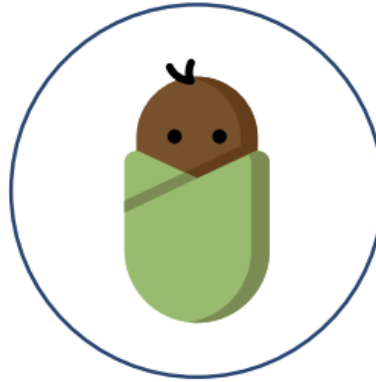
## PEOPLE WHO ARE VULNERABLE TO HEAT



Older people



People working outside



Infants



People with  
pre-existing medical



Pregnant and  
lactating women

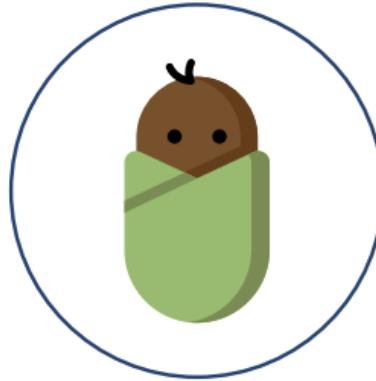
## PEOPLE WHO ARE VULNERABLE TO HEAT **AND COVID-19**



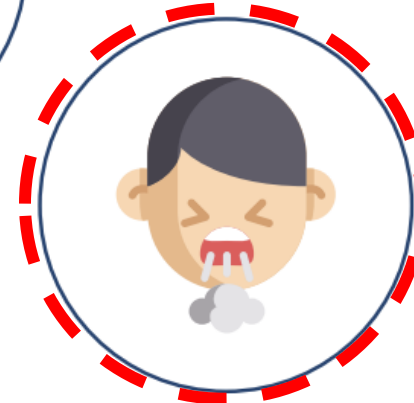
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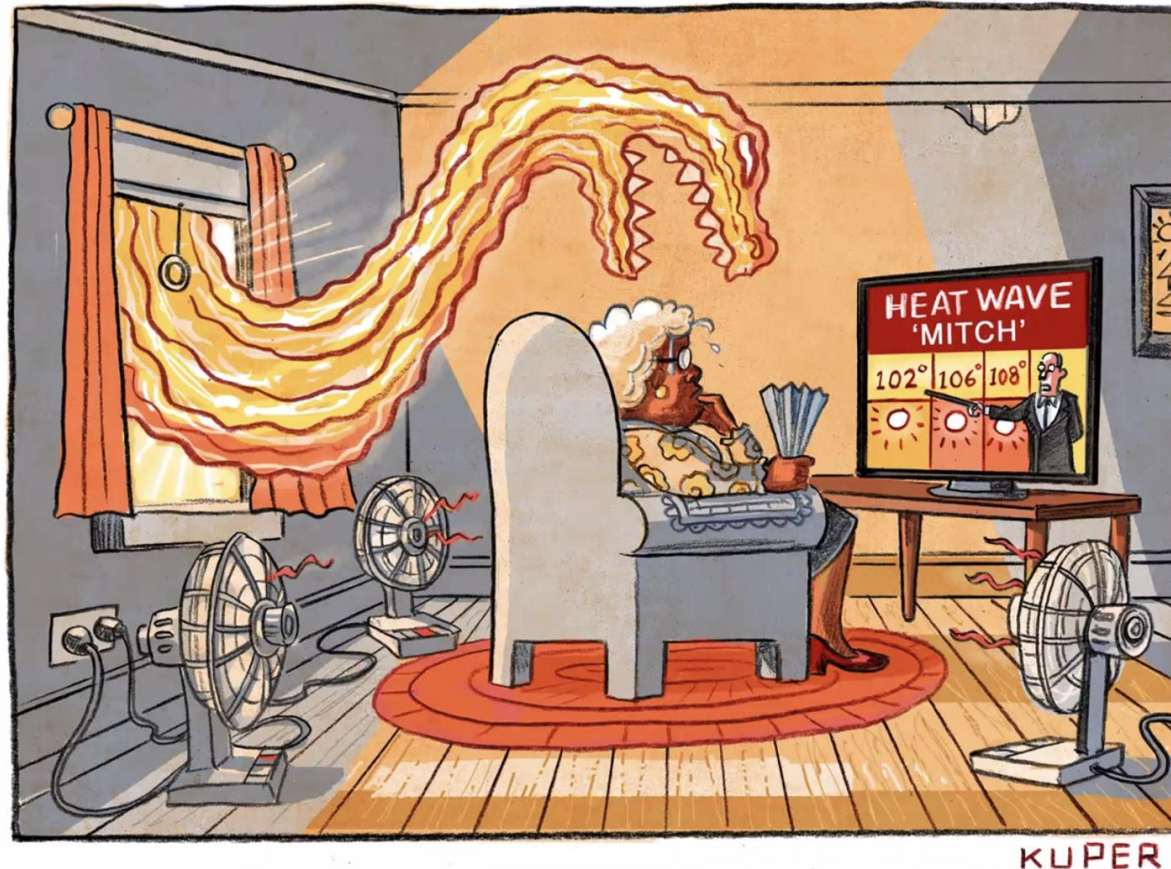


People with  
pre-existing medical



Pregnant and  
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# Balancing Act: Managing Heat and COVID-19



# Managing Heat + COVID-19

1. In normal times . . . we tell people to go to parks, libraries, senior centres and other shared public spaces to cool down during the summer heat.

**What should we do now?**

1. In normal times . . . we tell young people that they should go visit their elderly neighbors or grandparents before and during a heatwave to make sure they are feeling well, have enough water, and a way to stay cool. **What should we do now?**



# Some Key Messages

- Wearing PPE and working in inadequately cooled conditions for long periods of time increases risk of heat stress for healthcare workers and other first responders
- Heat stress can present a range of symptoms that mimic early COVID-19 symptoms.
- Public fear of seeking healthcare during COVID-19 may result in preventable heat-related deaths
- Limited access to residential air conditioning is a major concern for many, particularly if sheltering in place during hot weather.
- Air conditioning and ventilation systems that are well-maintained and operated should not increase the risk of virus transmission.
- Public parks, beaches, swimming pools and splash parks provide essential outdoor cool spaces for residents.

# Information Series – Heat and COVID 19



Updated 27 May 2020

## TECHNICAL BRIEF

## PROTECTING HEALTH FROM HOT WEATHER DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### PLANNING CHECKLIST

## MANAGING HEAT RISK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This checklist is for local and national authorities coordinating heatwave preparedness and response measures.

It provides a list of measures to consider when adapting heatwave plans and interventions in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.



**Disclaimer:** The suggestions in this checklist will not be applicable in all contexts. Please review these measures and use the context of your city or locality as a guide to which actions you should implement.

These suggestions focus mainly on heat action measures which may be affected by COVID-19, and may require adaptation to the local context. Interventions that are unlikely to be affected are not listed here. For general heat action guidance see additional resources listed at the end of this document. These ideas are based on existing guidance and peer-reviewed information, as well as expert opinion.



### VULNERABLE GROUPS AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The people who are most vulnerable to hot weather and COVID-19 include older people (over age 65); those with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, respiratory illness or diabetes; those taking certain medications; those who are overweight and obese; those who are marginalized and isolated, including those experiencing homelessness; pregnant women and people wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) in places that are not temperature controlled.

People infected with, or recovering from, COVID-19 are presumed more vulnerable to heat stress, including outdoor workers returning to the workplace.

Vulnerable populations may be in more precarious social and economic conditions due to COVID-19, including from lost wages, increased isolation, and strains or gaps in social networks. This can increase vulnerability to heat risk by limiting healthcare access, transport options, food security and utility access.

- ☐ Identify your high risk communities by reviewing where local heat islands occur, and where this may overlap with high incidence or risk of COVID-19.
- ☐ Increase the use of [telephone outreach programmes](#) for regular check-ins with the most vulnerable during hot weather to reduce the need for face-to-face interactions due to COVID-19. Social service partners, general practitioners and local authorities can help with setting up a system. If there is a system already in place, consider advertising it to increase enrolment.
- ☐ Review plans for in-home safety checks. Ensure the health and safety of outreach staff and volunteers and the people they visit through training and the provision of PPE.
- ☐ Coordinate with formal and informal social service systems to identify vulnerable individuals and reach them more effectively with key messages and support.
- ☐ Review and expand social safety net programmes to support at-home cooling strategies for the most vulnerable people. For example, energy subsidies could be provided to at-risk households to ensure they can afford home cooling measures.

See Q&As on social services and vulnerable groups +

<http://ghhin.org/heat-and-covid-19/>



# Guidance Materials for National Societies

- Material specifically adapted from the Global Heat Health Information Network's Heat and COVID-19 Information Series.
- Provides practical steps that National Societies can take to protect staff, volunteers, and vulnerable people from heat extremes.
- Checklists relating
  - People most Vulnerable to both heat stress and Covid-19?
  - Public outreach on Heatwaves during COVID 19 Pandemic
  - Outdoor Public Space for Cooling, Safe or not?
  - Cooling Centres during COVID 19 Pandemic
  - Making Residents cool at home (lack of air conditioning)
  - Partners to collaborate
  - Consideration for Heatwave in Informal Settlement
  - Reducing Heat Stress while wearing PPE
  - Protecting Staff and Volunteers from heat-related illness during COVID 19 Pandemic

## Extreme Heat during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This year Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are dealing with the dual risks of COVID-19 and extreme heat, amongst many other compound disasters. For many staff and volunteers, the heat risks may be amplified due to considerations for COVID-19 like wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). At the same time, vulnerable individuals may be reluctant to seek cool spaces during a heatwave, out of fear of infection. These guidance materials provide practical steps that National Societies can take to protect staff, volunteers, and vulnerable people from heat extremes. This material is adapted from the Global Heat Health Information Network's [Heat and COVID-19 Information Series](#).

### WHICH PEOPLE ARE MOST VULNERABLE TO BOTH HEAT STRESS AND COVID-19?

All people can potentially fall ill to both heat stress and COVID-19. However, those who are considered the most vulnerable to both are:

- Older people (>65 years and especially >85years);
- People with underlying health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, kidney disease, diabetes / obesity, compromised immune systems, mental health issues (psychiatric disorders, depression);
- Essential workers who work outdoors during the hottest times of the day or who work in places that are not temperature-controlled;
- Health workers and auxiliaries wearing personal protective equipment;
- Pregnant women;
- People living in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, especially without adequate cooling and ventilation;
- People who are marginalized and isolated (experiencing homelessness, migrants with language barriers, old people living alone) and those with low income or inadequate housing, including informal settlements;
- People on medication: some medication for the diseases listed above impairs thermoregulation. The impact of treatment for COVID-19 is currently unknown but should be monitored to assess any additional vulnerability;
- People who have, or are recovering from, COVID-19 (which can be associated with acute kidney injury);
- People in prison, or residential institutions especially if cooling measures are not in place.

### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Collaborate with formal and informal social service systems to identify and reach vulnerable individuals with key messages and support.
- ☐ Increase the use of telephone outreach programmes for daily check-ins with the most vulnerable during heatwaves. If a system is already in place, support efforts to increase enrolment.
- ☐ Review plans for in-home safety checks. Ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers and the people they visit through training and the provision of PPE.
- ☐ Identify your high-risk communities by reviewing where local heat islands occur, and where this may overlap with high incidence or risk of COVID-19.
- ☐ Assist efforts to review and expand social safety net programmes to support at-home cooling strategies for the most vulnerable people. For example, cities may be expanding energy subsidies to ensure households can afford home cooling measures. National Societies can assist with registration.

**Thank You**