



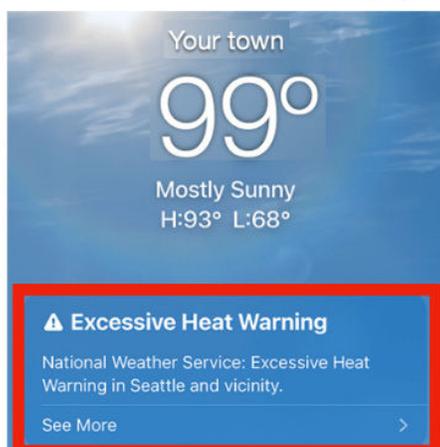
## Tip Sheet for Patients with Multiple Sclerosis

### Staying Safe When It's Hot Outside

Hot days can bring out symptoms of multiple sclerosis (MS). When it's hot outside, you can also become dehydrated (when your body loses too much water), and dehydration can also worsen symptoms of multiple sclerosis, like fatigue. Follow these tips to stay safe.

- 1. Know when high temperatures may put your health at risk.** To get your local forecast, use your phone's weather app or go to [weather.com](https://www.weather.com) and type your town or zip-code in the search box at the top of the screen. Look for a heat advisory or warning.

#### Phone weather app



#### weather.com



Weather alerts will appear in areas outlined in red (including heat advisories and heat warnings)

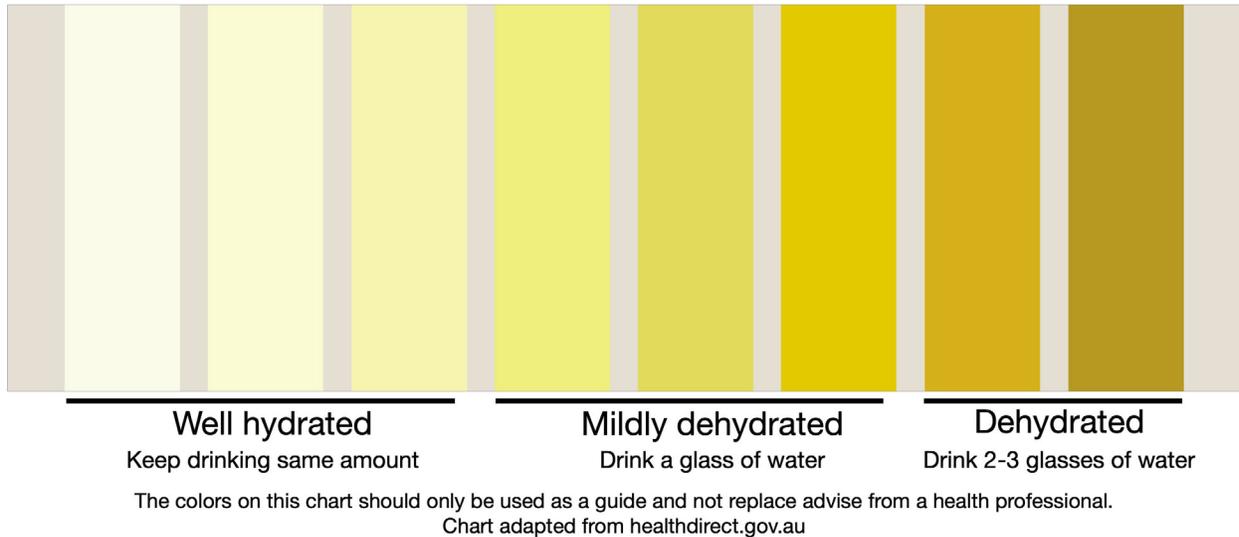
You can also tune in to your local weather forecast on TV or radio and listen for an announcement of a heat advisory or extreme heat warning.

**If you feel hot, even if there is not a heat advisory or heat warning, use the following tips to stay safe.**

- 2. Drink to help your body handle heat.** Avoid sugary drinks, alcohol and caffeine in coffee, tea, energy drinks, and some sports drinks that have high amounts of sugar and/or caffeine. Eat light, easy-to-digest foods, such as fruit or salads.

For most people, when your urine is light yellow or clear, you are well hydrated. If your urine is dark, you need to drink more (see chart below). However, if you are on dialysis or take diuretics (i.e., water pills), talk with your provider about how much water you should drink when it gets hot outside.

## Urine color chart to assess hydration



**It is important to stay hydrated even if you have trouble controlling your bladder.**

### **3. Take your medicines as prescribed unless your provider tells you not to.**

Many medicines may affect your body's ability to deal with heat. These include medicines for high blood pressure (ACE inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers/ ARBs, or beta blockers), medicines for depression and anxiety (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors/SSRIs), or antipsychotics such as quetiapine (Seroquel), risperidone (Risperdal), and olanzapine (Zyprexa), among others. Anticholinergics used to treat bladder dysfunction in patients with MS may also reduce your ability to deal with heat. If you are taking any of these, make sure you are following the rest of the tips on this sheet to keep yourself cool and safe.

### **4. Use cool water on your body: take a cool bath or shower or dampen cloths for a sponge bath.** If you use a fan, use it only when the temperature is below 95°F. Blowing hot air on your body can increase your body temperature.

### **5. Do outdoor activities when temperatures are lower, usually before 11 am or after 6 pm.** If you work outdoors, or near a heat source such as a grill, furnace, or boiler, take frequent breaks to rest and rehydrate in a shaded or air-conditioned area, and discuss a heat safety plan with your employer.

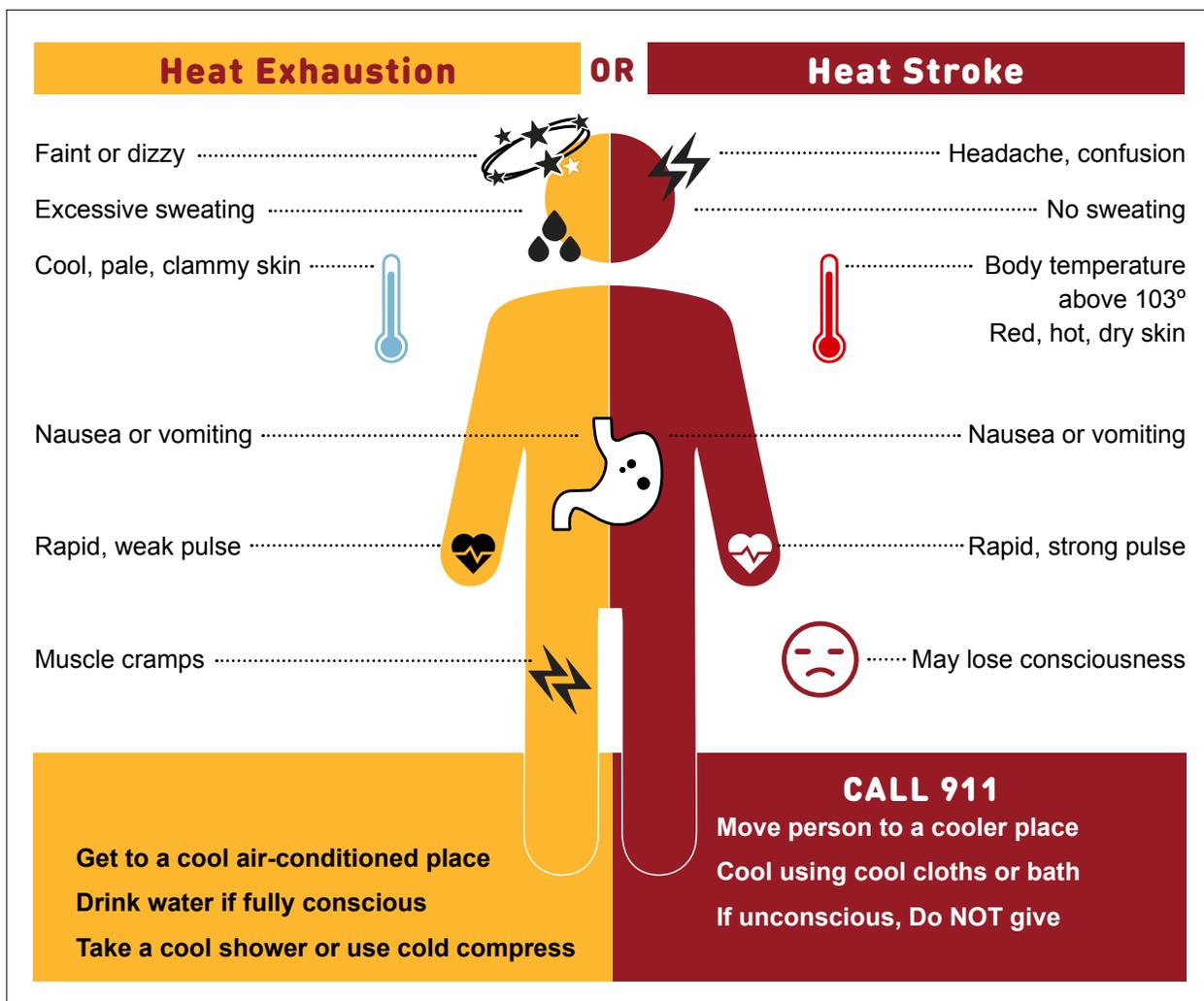
### **6. Avoid strenuous activities** as much as possible, like running or lifting heavy equipment, if you are already feeling hot. These activities can raise your body's temperature and make the symptoms of MS worse.

### **7. Dress for success.** Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing. Wear sunscreen and a hat when you're outside, as sunburns can make it harder to stay

cool. Do not go barefoot, even on the beach or at the pool, because the ground may be too hot, and you can burn your feet.

**8. Know where to go to stay cool.** If you do not have air conditioning at home, it is too expensive, or the temperature in your home is over 80°F, know where you will go to stay safe when it gets hot outside. This could be a neighbor’s home, a place of worship, a community center, a local building designated as a cooling center, or even a shaded area in a local park.

**9. Know the signs when your body is telling you it’s too hot.** Call your doctor if you feel a worsening of symptoms of MS, like fatigue, difficulty controlling your bladder, changes in vision, or new weakness. See the figure below for more signs that your body is too hot.



*Adapted from the National Weather Service and U.S. CDC*

**10. Complete a Heat Action Plan before the weather gets hot outside.** Ask your provider to review the Heat Action Plan handout at your next appointment.