

The background of the top half of the page features a close-up of a thermometer with a red liquid column. The thermometer is positioned diagonally, with the scale showing temperatures from -40 to 40. The background behind the thermometer is a bright, orange-hued sky with soft, white clouds. The thermometer's scale is marked with major numbers at -40, -20, 0, 20, and 40, with smaller increments in between. The red liquid in the bulb is at approximately -10 degrees.

DRUGS AND EXTREME HOT WEATHER

Our climate is changing. In the UK, this means we are seeing more frequent bouts of severe weather.

Extreme hot weather is an average temperature of 30°C+ by day and 15°C+ overnight. It can be unpredictable and severely affect your life.

If you take drugs to high levels or you are dependent on drugs, you need to take extra care of your health and wellbeing in extreme hot weather.

One way to adapt to climate change is to know how to look after yourself and others in the heat. Read our tips inside then identify your needs, such as adaptations to your home or routine, useful phone numbers and local support services.



Your health comes first

- Drug use in extreme heat increases risk of dehydration, overheating and accidents. If you can safely reduce drug use, do so with medical help.
- If you are dependent on drugs (particularly opiates or benzodiazepines), DO NOT stop taking drugs suddenly without medical help.
- Stay out of the heat and direct sunlight, particularly after taking drugs.
- Always contact your doctor if you feel mentally or physically unwell. Drugs and extreme heat have a lot in common in terms of effects on the body, including: dehydration, dizziness, headaches, changes to breathing, changes to heart rate and blood pressure, nausea, vomiting or cramps.
- Methadone / Subutex: if you are on daily supervised consumption and extreme hot weather affects your ability to access your medication, speak immediately to your prescriber / support worker.
- Check storage conditions for prescribed medication – many advise to avoid direct sunlight and hot spaces. Avoid storing medication close to your body.
- If extreme heat stops you going to drug recovery groups, call peers for support.
- If you cannot avoid going out in extreme heat, stick to shaded areas. Take a refillable water bottle with you to keep hydrated and assist with taking prescribed medication. If you feel hot, seek out air-conditioned, cool public spaces such as shopping malls, supermarkets and community buildings.
- Don't go swimming to cool down after taking drugs – risk of drowning is much higher under the influence of drugs.



Food and drink

- If you are dehydrated, the effects of drugs will be more severe – take in cool non-alcoholic fluids such as water or fruit juice.
- DO NOT drink very large quantities of water too quickly to rehydrate – little and often is best, throughout the day.
- Eat regular light meals with high water content – salad, fruit, vegetables, cold soup.
- If your drug use varies across the day, make and consume food and non-alcoholic fluids at the best times for you – it's better to eat and drink when it suits you than not all.



Money matters

- Keep an emergency fund for extreme hot weather.
- Reduce spend on drugs in extreme heat to pay for food, non-alcoholic drinks, clothes, electricity, gas and phone.



Dress to keep cool

- Wear loose, cotton, light-coloured clothes.
- If you have to go out, wear a lightweight hat or scarf, sunglasses and sunscreen. Wear well-fitting sandals rather than flip-flops to reduce risk of accidents or injury.



Keep cool indoors

- Pull blinds or curtains on sun-facing windows.
- If it's safe, open windows when it cools down to ventilate.
- Keep a spray bottle of water in the fridge to cool your face.

If you have taken drugs:

- Cool down by wiping a lukewarm wet cloth / sponge against your skin.
- DO NOT take a cold shower or bath, which may shock your system.
- Take care operating electric fans.



If you are homeless

- DO NOT sit out or sleep in direct sun. Seek out shade or go indoors.
- Find sources of clean water to drink at community facilities and shelters.
- Take extra care with food you are given or you find – food spoils much

quicker in extreme heat and can lead to poisoning.

- Wash feet regularly to avoid infection, particularly if you wear the same footwear everyday.



Keep in touch and informed

- Isolating in extreme heat can make you feel worse and lead to higher drug use. Keep in daily contact with friends, family and support workers.
- Turn on the TV or radio to find out weather reports.
- Look out for people who are vulnerable. Can you think of anyone who may need a supportive phone call or message?
- Find out about help to keep cool and well from community / faith groups.



DRUGS AND EXTREME HOT WEATHER

To keep yourself safe and well in extreme weather, check out the full series of advice leaflets from Equinox:

- Alcohol and extreme cold weather
- Alcohol and extreme hot weather
- Drugs and extreme cold weather
- Drugs and extreme hot weather
- Mental ill health and extreme cold weather
- Mental ill health and extreme hot weather

**To download and share electronic copies,
please visit: www.equinoxcare.org.uk/climate-change**

These guides have been developed by Equinox with funding from Defra. The content is based on the experiences of Equinox service users with expert guidance from Equinox medical professionals.