

IAEM advises public to take care during the current heat wave

Although the recent and on-going warm weather is very welcome, unfortunately the good weather has resulted in preventable fatalities and other unfortunate consequences. It is tragic for an individual family to have to associate the good summer with their loved one's death or a serious adverse event.

The medical staff of Ireland's 30 Emergency Departments (ED) thus offer advice to the public based on their expertise and experiences of recent days.

- In the past 10 days there have been a spate of deaths by drowning, many occurring in younger people. The public are advised to follow the simple guidance from [Irish Water Safety](#) to prevent such tragedies. There are a number of locations that are dangerous for swimming, both around our coasts and inland. These become no less dangerous just because the weather has improved;
- Lawnmower and garden equipment injuries have also risen. The good weather offers opportunities for householders and others to complete necessary garden tasks; however the normal precautions that should be taken when using equipment that is particularly dangerous for eyes, fingers and toes must continue to be used. Failure to use the normal protective equipment because of the heat may result in tragic consequences;
- At this time of the year the capacity of the sun to burn is at its greatest. EDs unfortunately have seen cases of severe sunburn, sufficient for patients to be referred to Burns Units for treatment and some of these victims will be left with lifelong scars. Those responsible for infants, children and those with physical or intellectual disability need to be particularly careful during this period;
- EDs have seen large numbers of elderly patients who have become acutely unwell because of dehydration. Indeed, some have gone into kidney failure as a result. This is a particular risk for those with chronic disease as well as those on certain types of medication;
- The young and the elderly are particularly at risk of heat-related illness from prolonged exposure to high temperatures or strenuous activity in hot weather. The body temperature rises and this leads progressively to heat cramps, heat exhaustion and ultimately to heatstroke, a potentially fatal condition.

The Association endorses the advice issued by the [HSE and Dr. Tony Holohan, the Chief Medical Officer](#) on 16th July 2013 and draws the public's attention to some simple and practical guidance issued in the UK, entitled [Looking after yourself and others during hot weather](#).

It is hoped that all our citizens will safely enjoy the current good weather. Common sense and attention to basic safety advice can make the difference between this summer being an enjoyable one and one marred by long lasting negative consequences.

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