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AMA QUEENSLAND: SUMMER HEATWAVE CAN BE DEADLY

With a heatwave expected for the first official day of summer, Queensland doctors have warned the searing heat could be deadly without taking proper precautions.

Weather forecasters have predicted temperatures will soar from Thursday, with some regions seeing daytime temperatures over 40°C.

AMA Queensland President Dr Chris Zappala said people should aim to stay cool and hydrated.

“Heatwaves are the most deadly natural phenomenon in Australia, claiming hundreds of lives each year,” Dr Zappala said.

“This summer is set to be a scorcher so it’s important for all of us to take extra care.

“That’s especially true of vulnerable groups like the sick, elderly, babies, pregnant women, and breast-feeding mothers.”

AMA Queensland recommends six simple steps to stay safe in the heat:

1. Drink plenty of water – even if you do not feel thirsty. Judge fluid intake adequacy by how often you go to the toilet – it should be many times a day!
2. Spend as much time as possible in air-conditioned or cool environments.
3. Keep cool by using wet towels, taking cool showers or going for a swim.
4. Stay out of the sun during the hottest parts of the day.
5. If you have to go outside, stay in the shade and take water with you.
6. Wear a hat, light, loose-fitting clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses – slip, slop, slap wrap!

Dr Zappala said extreme heat could cause heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

“The symptoms of heat exhaustion include a pale complexion, sweating, rapid heart rate, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting and fainting,” he said.

“If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should take immediate steps to lower your body

temperature – lie down somewhere cool, drink cool water, remove your outer clothing and contact your GP.”

If left untreated, heat exhaustion could lead to heat stroke, possible seizure, collapse and loss of consciousness, and an ambulance must be called immediately.

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