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DOCTORS WARN QUEENSLAND HEATWAVE COULD KILL

The severe heatwave affecting much of Queensland this week poses a serious threat to human life, according to the Australian Medical Association Queensland.

Heatwaves are the most deadly natural phenomenon in Australia, claiming around 500 lives each year.

Dr Richard Kidd, a Brisbane GP and AMA Queensland board member, said the public should be concerned by extreme temperatures and follow medical advice.

“The public needs to realise that extreme heat is a killer and take warnings seriously,” Dr Kidd said.

“Hundreds die each year as a direct result of heat and the peak time for deaths is right now.

“This is a very dangerous time, especially for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, babies, pregnant women, breast-feeding mothers and the sick.”

Much of central and northern Queensland will experience ‘extreme’ and ‘severe’ heatwave conditions for the next few days, according to the Bureau of Meteorology.

AMA Queensland urges people to follow this advice:

- Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water – even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Spend as much time as possible in air-conditioned surroundings.
- Keep cool by using wet towels and taking cool showers.
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest parts of the day.
- If you have to go outside, stay in the shade and take water with you.
- Wear a hat and light, loose-fitting clothing.

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

Patients suffering these symptoms should seek a cool area, lie down, drink cool water, remove their outer clothing and contact their GP.

If left untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke – involving possible seizure, collapse and loss of consciousness. Call an ambulance immediately in such cases.

*** Interviews with Dr Richard Kidd are available on request.**

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