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Summer, sun, climate change

How can we protect ourselves from summertime heat? Advice and information in a new UBA background paper

'Protecting health from climate change' is the motto of this year's World Health Day. The effects of climate change and extreme weather events have a negative impact on human health. The extraordinarily long hot season in August 2003 in many parts of western Europe resulted in more than 40,000 deaths than otherwise usual, with some 7,000 cases in Germany. Those affected in large measure were the elderly and chronically ill. "Heat-related detriment to health can often be avoided, but one must know how", said Prof. Dr. Troge, President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). The UBA has published a new background paper on the causes and symptoms of the most important heat illnesses, which offers concrete advice on how to prevent negative effects on health.

Sunburn and heat rash—who isn't familiar with these wretched symptoms of a long drawn-out sunbath? These and other health risks of summer heat can very often be avoided if certain preventative measures are taken. Children and older people in particular should not be exposed to the sun any longer than necessary. It also holds for the rest of population that one must drink plenty of liquids and avoid strenuous physical activity. Should there be health damage despite observing these measures, for example sunstroke or heatstroke, a physician should be consulted. More advice and information on caring for the elderly at home can be read in the new UBA background paper. We also present various heat warning systems that may help to prepare for the summer hot season.

The new background paper on the causes and symptoms of common heat illnesses, including advice on how to prevent adverse health consequences, can be downloaded at: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/gesundheit/index.htm>

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