

Extreme heat more dangerous for people over 60

24th August 2026



Extreme heat may have a harsher effect on older people than doctors previously thought. Researchers from Stanford University in the USA have said that the body's tolerance for heat deteriorates in older people. They added

that the continuing rise in global temperatures could pose a serious risk of illness or death for those aged 60 and over. The threat of rising temperatures to the health of the over-60s has been seriously underestimated. The researchers said heatwaves will put millions of older people at risk of a condition called uncompensable heat stress. This is when the body loses its ability to cool itself. This can cause serious damage to the body and can even lead to death.

The researchers warned: "Intolerable heat will be experienced at much larger scales and for longer durations, affecting far more people than previously thought." They said the over-60s are at a higher risk because of three physical factors — they sweat less, their hearts have to work harder in the heat, and their blood vessels expand more slowly. These three things limit the ability of the body to cool itself. A director at the charity Age UK said she found the conclusions in the study alarming. She said: "This study means there's now no denying that extreme heat poses a very real health threat to our older population." Elderly people in low-income countries are likely to be at highest risk.

Sources: phys.org / aljazeera.com / theguardian.com

Writing

It's too late to reverse climate damage. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

extreme heat / doctors / the body / tolerance / global temperatures / illness / death / the over-60s / sweating / the heart / blood vessels / charity / low-income countries

True / False

- 1) The article says harsh heat has an extreme effect on old people. T / F
- 2) Older people have a higher tolerance for heat. T / F
- 3) The over-60s are at risk of a condition called uncomfortable heat stress. T / F
- 4) Older people's bodies may not be able to cool themselves in the heat. T / F
- 5) Extreme heat will be with us on a bigger scale and for longer. T / F
- 6) People who are over 60 sweat less. T / F
- 7) The blood vessels of people over 60 expand quickly. T / F
- 8) Older people in poorer countries are most at risk from extreme heat. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. extreme | a. worsens |
| 2. previously | b. citizens |
| 3. deteriorates | c. unbearable |
| 4. pose | d. earlier |
| 5. condition | e. enlarge |
| 6. intolerable | f. findings |
| 7. duration | g. hazardous |
| 8. expand | h. length of time |
| 9. conclusions | i. present |
| 10. population | j. illness |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How concerned are you about the world becoming warmer?
- c) Do you exercise on hot days?
- d) Do you worry about how much you sweat?
- e) What do you do to cool down when it's hot?
- f) What natural disasters are happening because of climate change?
- g) What will the climate be like in 50 years from now?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Extreme heat may have a harsher | a. that |
| 2. the body's tolerance for heat | b. risk of illness |
| 3. pose a serious | c. less |
| 4. The threat of | d. cool itself |
| 5. the body loses its ability to | e. effect on older people |
| 6. affecting far more people than | f. income countries |
| 7. they sweat | g. rising temperatures |
| 8. blood vessels | h. previously thought |
| 9. there's now no denying | i. deteriorates |
| 10. Elderly people in low- | j. expand more slowly |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of the changing climate?
- What changes in the weather have you noticed?
- How good are you at dealing with extreme heat?
- Do you prefer boiling hot or freezing cold temperatures?
- What do you like doing on hot days?
- What do you know about heatstroke?
- What's the hottest temperature you are comfortable with?
- What advice do you have for older people in hot weather?

Spelling

- than doctors oeliuyvsrp thought
- the body's ltaenecor
- heat aitoedrtesr
- The threat of rising esrrteeuatmp
- seriously nedemtrsteiuad
- at risk of a citidnono
- bateilnrloe heat
- for longer ranoudsti
- blood ssleesv
- dpxnea more slowly
- the oscnulonsci in the study
- no ienndgy

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. a	4. i	5. j
6. c	7. h	8. e	9. f	10. b

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What kind of effect might extreme heat have on older people.
2.	What deteriorates in older people?
3.	What is continuing to rise?
4.	What will cause uncompensable heat stress?
5.	With uncompensable heat stress, what is it difficult for the body to do?
6.	What did researchers say would be experienced at much larger scales?
7.	What does the article say older people do less?
8.	What in older people expand more slowly?
9.	What is Age UK?
10.	Where in the world are older people most at risk?

Speaking – Changing climate

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst climate-related difficulties at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| • Extreme heat | • Droughts |
| • Extreme cold | • Wildfires |
| • Heavy rain | • Food insecurity |
| • Typhoons | • Disrupted seasons |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	T	6	T	7	F	8	T
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.