

Heat in nursing and care settings: Action is needed

Swiss TPH survey commissioned by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) | 2026

For the first time, heat protection measures in the nursing and care sector have been recorded across Switzerland – with a clear result: heat places significant strain on care staff and there are gaps in the protection of staff, patients and clients.

At a glance

- **70% of care staff perceived heat at work during summer 2025 as moderately to very burdensome.**
- **Heat protection for staff, patients and clients is not yet standard practice; implementation is significantly more advanced in homecare and long-term care settings than in hospitals.**
- **Important measures such as cool rest areas and adapted work clothing are often lacking.**
- **Concrete action is needed at all levels – from healthcare institutions to policymakers.**

Background

Heatwaves are becoming more frequent and more intense in Switzerland. They pose a particular risk to vulnerable populations, including older people and those requiring care. At the same time, care staff work under physically and emotionally demanding conditions that are further exacerbated on hot days. Until now, no nationwide data were available on the status of heat protection in nursing and care settings. This gap is addressed by the present online survey conducted by Swiss TPH on behalf of the FOPH in collaboration with the Federal Office for the Environment. Approximately 900 staff from long-term care facilities, home care services, hospitals and clinics participated in the survey between September and October 2025. The survey was supported by Spitex Switzerland, CURAVIVA, and the Association Spitex Privée Suisse (ASPS).

Key findings

70%

of staff perceived the heat during summer 2025 as moderately to very burdensome.

9 out of 10

staff reported heat-related symptoms such as exhaustion, concentration problems, and reduced work motivation.

4 out of 10

staff rated heat protection measures for themselves as insufficient.

6 out of 10

staff confirmed that their patients and clients are well protected against heat.

Need for action

The findings show that progress has been made on heat protection in nursing and care settings, but implementation remains incomplete. Lack of time and building characteristics are cited as the main barriers. In particular, there is a gap between measures that are in place and those considered important by staff. For patients and clients, measures such as fluid provision and room cooling are frequently implemented, whereas more complex measures such as reviewing medication and transferring individuals to cooler spaces occur less often. Concrete, actionable measures are needed at both institutional and policy level.

Recommendations by Swiss TPH

For healthcare institutions

- Develop and implement action plans to protect staff (e.g. cool rest areas, appropriate work clothing) as well as patients and clients (e.g. identifying at-risk individuals, reviewing medication plans).
- Involve staff in developing measures through a participatory approach.
- Integrate heat protection into continuing education and professional training programs.

For cantons and municipalities

- Provide standard protection plans and organise information sessions for healthcare institutions.
- Establish heat action planning as a continuous process, including a central coordination group, regular review mechanisms and the involvement of healthcare institutions as partners.
- Promote exchange between institutions and provide long-term support for structural measures aimed at reducing indoor heat exposure.

To the federal government

- Systematically continue to monitor and evaluate heat protection measures across the healthcare system.

Source

Bürgler A., Luyten A., Jeannotot D., Ragetti M. S.: Erhebung 3 – Pflege und Betreuung: Hitzebelastung und Stand der Umsetzung von Hitzemassnahmen. Befragung von Mitarbeitenden in der Pflege und Betreuung 2025, April 2026 Commissioned by the Federal Office of Public Health. The full report is available at: <https://www.bag.admin.ch/de/gesundheitsbezogene-hitzeschutzmassnahmen-wo-steht-die-schweiz>

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