Heatwaves

- Heatwaves, or heat and hot weather that can last for several days, can have a significant impact on society, including a rise in heat-related deaths.
- The India Meteorological Department requires that temperatures increase 5–6 °C (9–10.8 °F) or more above the normal temperature to be called a heatwave.
- Heatwaves are among the most dangerous of natural hazards, but rarely receive adequate attention because their death tolls and destruction are not always immediately obvious.
- Population exposure to heat is increasing due to climate change.
- Globally, extreme temperature events are observed to be increasing in their frequency, duration, and magnitude.
- Exposure to heat causes severe symptoms, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke – a condition which causes faintness, as well as dry, warm skin, due to the inability of the body to control high temperatures.
- Other symptoms include swelling in the lower limbs, heat rash on the neck, cramps, headache, irritability, lethargy and weakness.
- Heat can cause severe dehydration, acute cerebrovascular accidents and contribute to thrombogenesis (blood clots).
- While the effects of heat may be exacerbated in cities, due to the urban heat island (UHI) effect, the livelihoods and wellbeing of non-urban communities can also be severely disrupted during and after periods of unusually hot weather.
- Heatwaves can burden health and emergency services and also increase strain on water, energy and transportation resulting in power shortages or even blackouts.
- Food and livelihood security may also be strained if people lose their crops or livestock due to extreme heat.

Data

- Between 2000 and 2016, the number of people exposed to heatwaves increased by around 125 million.
- From 1998-2017, more than 166 000 people died due to heatwaves, including more than 70 000 who died during the 2003 heatwave in Europe.