



Beat The Heat! Summer Help For Seniors

Ways to Help Seniors Beat the Heat





Who Is At Risk and Why

The elderly, very young, physically impaired, obese and those who have been prescribed certain medications are the most susceptible to heat related illnesses.

Some prescription medications can have negative side effects if the user has prolonged exposure to the sun or takes part in outdoor physical activities in very hot weather.

Certain medications (e.g., diuretics, anti-psychotics, tranquilizers, antidepressants, blood pressure medications and over-the-counter sleeping pills) can impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or inhibit perspiration under similar conditions. All of these risks are amplified when combined with alcoholic beverages.

Seniors, and their families, should always read the warning labels on medication and check with a physician or pharmacist to avoid harmful side effects. Never alter or change a medication schedule without consulting a physician first.

Recognizing a Heat Related Illness

Elderly people ages 65 and older are more prone to heat stress than younger people for several reasons:

- Elderly people do not adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in temperature.
- They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat.
- They are more likely to take prescription medicines that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.

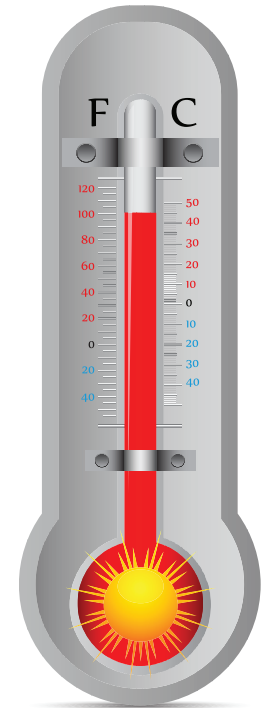
<i>Problem</i>	<i>Reason</i>	<i>Symptoms</i>	<i>Treatment</i>
Cramps (soreness)	Overworked muscles. Fatigue. Low electrolytes. Lack of water (dehydration).	Muscle cramping of the shoulders, calves and thighs. Painful muscle spasms.	Rest and hydration using electrolyte solutions, such as Gatorade, PowerAde, etc. Stretching and massaging affected muscles.
Heat Exhaustion (sick)	Heavy sweating results in loss of fluids and electrolytes. Excessive activity.	Sick feeling, weakness. Lightheaded when/while standing. Headache, nausea and vomiting. Skin is cool and "clammy" to the touch.	Cease activities. Relocate to a cooler area. Rest. Replenish fluids and electrolytes using "sips." Medical assistance may be necessary.
Heat Stroke (life threatening)	Body's cooling system is overloaded. Severe dehydration. Excessive activity.	Lethargic, disoriented possibly combative. In some cases unconsciousness may occur. Seizures are common. Hot skin that feels moist yet dry.	Call 911. Cool the individual with whatever you have available; Cool water, fan, remove clothing, ice packs at the groin and armpit areas.

Recognizing a Heat Related Illness

- Be sure to contact all physicians related to your loved one and check to see if they are on a fluid-restrictive diet.
- Prepare in advance at least one gallon of water per person, per day and refrigerate.
- Collect all essential medicines they may be taking along with all prescription information and keep them in a cool location in the home.
- Keep a list of the names, addresses, phone numbers for all doctors and pharmacists.
- Stock up on some nonperishable, easily prepared snacks and fluids such as juices, fruits & water.
- Always check-in before, during and after the hottest points of the day.
- Organize a neighborhood "buddy system" using friends, family and neighbors to check on your loved one either in person or by using the phone.

Tips For Beating the Heat

- Always avoid direct sun and the heat.
- Always close blinds, drapes & windows to keep the heat out of the home.
- Only open windows and doors if it is cooler outside than it is inside.
- Minimize your activities during the hottest period of the day (usually 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.)
- Eat small meals and avoid fats, proteins, sugars and especially alcohol.
- Wear loose fitting, light weight clothing.
- Stay in cooler areas of the home using air conditioning, ceiling or free standing fans.
- Electric lights create heat when turned on, so do your best to avoid lighting during the day.
- Use cool damp towels on wrists and the back of the neck.
- If you don't feel comfortable leaving your loved one alone, seek assistance.



No Air? Relief Could Be Closer

If air conditioning is not available in the home, consider a trip to one of the following facilities.

- Local libraries
- Senior centers
- Community centers
- Movie theaters
- Shopping malls
- Churches/temples/places of worship
- Supermarkets/grocery stores

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