



## Discussing End-of-Life Care with a Loved One

No one looks forward to talking about end-of-life care—particularly with a cherished parent, relative, or friend. As a result, many avoid this important topic until a loved one receives a terminal diagnosis or cannot make personal health decisions on their own.

### Starting the Conversation

Here are some tips to minimize discomfort for everyone as you begin the end-of-life conversation with your senior:

#### Approach with Compassion

Break the ice by asking your senior's thoughts about the future and if you can help them prepare for it. The AARP suggests these opening lines:

- "While everything is okay right now, have you thought about what matters to you at the end of life?"
- "Mom/Dad, I've been thinking about the future. Have you thought about what matters to you down the road?"
- "Mom/Dad, have you ever heard of advanced directives? Maybe we should discuss that to make sure you get the treatment you want down the road."



#### State Your Observations

If you notice your loved one experiencing health changes, you can compassionately point them out. For example, you might say, "Mom, I notice you are losing weight/eating less/having trouble getting around. Your health and well-being are important to me, and I want you to be okay."

#### Acknowledge the Discomfort

Feeling uncomfortable about discussing end-of-life issues is completely normal. Although it might seem counterintuitive, acknowledging this discomfort can help. You might say: "Dad, I know you don't want to talk about the end of your life right now—and honestly, neither do I—but I want to honor your final wishes."

#### Find Their Voice

A Power of Attorney—or someone to make healthcare decisions for your loved one if they are not capable of making them—can give them a "voice." Selecting a Power of Attorney can also lead to a discussion about a Living Will—a legal document that outlines what types of medical care someone wants or does not want if they become incapacitated. A Power of Attorney can help reduce stress, confusion, and disputes among family members during a challenging time.

### Hire a Professional End-of-Life Caregiver

Visiting Angels caregivers have access to end-of-life care training to help them support older adults and their family members during this challenging time. The program provides caregivers with an understanding of the various stages of dying to reassure and comfort older adults while reducing stress for families.

Regardless of age or the stage your older loved one may be in, a Visiting Angels caregiver can provide the support they need to maintain a sense of purpose. A Visiting Angels caregiver can help you and your family spend more quality time with your loved one.

If your senior is approaching the end-of-life stage, contact Visiting Angels to schedule a free home care consultation to discuss your loved one's personal care needs.

# Keep Seniors Safe & Cool in Extreme Heat

As heat waves strike communities during the dog days of summer, people of all ages frantically look for ways to cool off. Family caregivers of seniors experience even more pressure and stress. They need to keep their older loved ones safe and comfortable during periods of soaring temperatures. Teamwork and a bit of extra planning are sometimes required.

## Seniors and Heat-Related Illness

Long exposure to high temperatures isn't safe for anyone, especially older adults at risk of suffering heat-related illness. In fact, the National Institute on Aging reports most people who die of heat-related illnesses are older than 50.

Due to normal aging-related changes, older adults are sometimes unable to recognize when they are becoming overheated. They may not adapt to changing temperatures or unable to exert themselves the same way as when they were younger.

Older adults with dementia, speech challenges, or other health conditions may have difficulty communicating feeling overheated. Watch for symptoms of excessive heat exposure, including:

- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Muscle Cramps
- Swelling of Ankles or Feet
- Problems with Coordination
- Nausea
- Cold, Clammy Skin
- Rapid Pulse

Some symptoms can indicate heat stroke, which requires immediate medical attention. Symptoms of heat stroke that require emergency care include:

- Fainting
- Confusion, Agitation, or Mood Swings
- Body Temp Over 104°F
- Dry, Flushed Skin
- Rapid, Strong Pulse or Slow, Weak Pulse
- Lack of Sweating

## Keeping Seniors Safe in a Heat Wave

Following these tips can help to keep your senior loved ones safe during a heat wave:

### Check Up

Check up on your senior often to monitor if they are having any symptoms of heat-related illness. Family members, friends, and neighbors can coordinate a schedule of in-person visits.

### Hydrate

Make sure seniors are drinking plenty of water and limit intake—or avoid—caffeine and alcohol. Seniors who need to limit liquids due to a medical condition should ask their doctor how to handle hydration when temperatures are high.

### Stay Cool Indoors

Staying indoors during the hottest part of the day—typically between noon and 4 pm—can help lower the risk of heat-related illness. If your older loved one does not have air conditioning or fans at home, visit a cool place, such as the mall, library, church, senior center, or a family member's house.

### Keep the Home Cool

Ensure air conditioning and fans are in good working order. Keep blinds, shades, and curtains closed during the hottest part of the day. Limit the use of appliances, that may throw off excess heat.

### Wear Cool Clothing

Older adults sometimes wear sweaters and long pants during hot weather because of problems with body temperature regulation. This can contribute to heat-related illness.

### Use Sun Protection

If your senior must be out in the sun, they should wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat—and caregivers should be on the lookout for signs of heat-related illness.

## In-Home Care Support from Visiting Angels

Helping your older loved one through a heat wave safely can be challenging, but help is available. Visiting Angels can keep your senior safe during periods of high temperatures and will monitor for troublesome symptoms. When you can't be there to help your loved one beat the heat, a Visiting Angels caregiver will go the extra mile to make sure they stay cool.

Visiting Angels care coordinators are available to discuss your loved one's care needs via a free home care consultation. Call **800.365.4189** today for more information.

