

Tips for Seniors and People with Disabilities:

Hot Weather Preparedness



Seniors are more prone to heat-related health problems than younger people. Nearly all of a senior's internal organs function with less efficiency, especially those that help the body deal with heat. Also, most seniors are on combinations of medications that further slow the body's ability to deal with heat. Here are some general guidelines to provide basic information about maintaining well being when the weather is hot.

1. **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER** – don't wait until you're thirsty. You lose a lot of water through perspiration. Carry a water bottle with you if you are able.
2. **AVOID ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE** – they cause your body to lose more water.
3. **STAY IN A WELL-VENTILATED AREA** – circulation of air helps you keep cool. Open a window or turn on a fan or air conditioner.
4. **DRESS "COOL"** - Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing, sunscreen, and a broad-brimmed hat.
5. **AVOID UNNECESSARY ACTIVITY** - especially in a hot environment.
6. **KNOW YOUR MEDICATION** – the heat may affect your reaction to certain medications.
7. **HAVE A FRIEND CHECK UP ON YOU** – plan to have a friend check on you at different times of the day when the temperature is extremely high.
8. **PLAN AHEAD** – try to plan your outside activities during the coolest part of the day, early in the morning or later in the evening.
9. **TAKE YOUR TIME** – leave plenty of extra time so you don't have to run around in a hurry.
10. **EAT LIGHT MEALS.**

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Heat Related Illness

Heat Cramps

Warning Signs:

- Painful muscle contractions, usually in the hamstring muscles.
- Not everybody experiences these symptoms prior to heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

What to do:

- Take heat cramps seriously, cool yourself down to avoid more serious problems.

Heat Exhaustion

Warning Signs:

- Dizziness, fatigue, faintness and/or headache.
- Skin that is pale and clammy.
- Pulse is rapid and weak.
- Breathing is fast and shallow.
- Muscle cramps.
- Intense thirst.

What to do:

- Seek medical attention immediately!

Heatstroke

Warning Signs:

- Often preceded by heat exhaustion and its symptoms
- Skin that is hot, dry and flushed - no sweating.
- High body temperatures.
- Rapid heartbeat.
- Confusion

What to do:

- Call 911. This is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. While waiting for help to arrive, get out of the sun or heat, drink fluids, and lie down with cool washcloths on your face and neck.