

PREVENTING Heat-Related Illness

TIPS for Older Adults

What are the symptoms of heat-related illness?

HEAT Exhaustion

- Heavy Sweating
- Weakness
- Cold, pale, clammy skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

HEAT Stroke

- A very high temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, and dry skin (may appear wet if person was sweating from heavy work or exercise)
- Rapid or strong pulse
- Possible unconsciousness

Medications that could interfere with your bodies ability to regulate temperature

- Allergy Medicines (Antihistamines)
- Sedatives
- Anticholinergics
- Some heart and blood pressure medicines (vasoconstrictors and beta blockers)

Do I need to be concerned about hot temperatures?

Yes! When it gets hot outside, our bodies can be vulnerable to heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke. During a period of abnormally and uncomfortable hot weather, such as days over 90 or 95 degrees, our bodies can become too hot and lose the ability to cool down. As we get older, our bodies often have a more difficult time regulating our own body temperature. We often have delayed perception to higher temperatures and may not drink enough water. Our ability to sweat is reduced, so we become more sensitive to heat-related illnesses.

What's the difference between **heat exhaustion and **heat stroke**?**

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness, but it can easily turn into heat stroke. Heat exhaustion could happen when you are exposed to high temperatures for several days, without replacing your body's fluids and electrolytes.

A **heat stroke** could happen when your body becomes too hot and loses the ability to control its temperature. This can lead to more serious health issues, such as organ and brain damage. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention.

How do I protect myself on hot days?

- ☐ Drink more water than usual. Don't wait until you are thirsty.
- ☐ Use an air conditioner instead of a fan as your primary cooling device. If you don't have air conditioning, visit a cooling center.
- ☐ Contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Connection at 503-988-3646 for more information, and a list of senior cooling centers.
- ☐ If you have to use a fan, don't set it up to blow directly on you. Instead you should use it to create cross ventilation in your home.
- ☐ Try not to use your stove and oven.
- ☐ Eat a lot of fruit, and light meals to help you stay hydrated.
- ☐ Keep the sun out of your home by closing your curtains or window shades.
- ☐ Buddy up! Identifying heat related illness may be difficult. You may need medical attention but not know it, so check in with a friend or neighbor, and have them do the same for you. If symptoms are recognized, seek medical attention immediately.

Warning Signs:

Heat Exhaustion vs. **HEAT STROKE**

Heat-related illness is

Preventable!

Stay somewhere cool

Drink plenty of water

Avoid sugar, alcohol & caffeine

Wear light clothing

Paleness

Tiredness

Weakness

Dizziness

Headache

Fainting

Muscle cramps

Heavy sweating

Nausea or vomiting

Extremely high body
temperature (103°F+)

Red, hot, dry skin
(with no sweating)

Rapid, strong pulse

Throbbing headache

Dizziness

Nausea

Confusion

Unconsciousness

Watch out!

*If left untreated,
heat exhaustion can
progress to*



STOP

If you recognize symptoms
of heat stroke, it is
LIFE THREATENING.

Get the person somewhere
cool and seek medical
attention
IMMEDIATELY.

Michelle L. Holshue, 2012

Data on heat-related illness via CDC:

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>