

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Heat Waves – Extreme Temperatures in Homes

When the body gets too hot, it begins to perspire or sweat to cool itself off. If the perspiration is not able to evaporate, the body cannot regulate its temperature. Evaporation is a cooling process. **When perspiration is evaporated off the body, it effectively reduces the body's temperature.** When the atmospheric moisture content (i.e. relative humidity) is high, the rate of evaporation from the body *decreases*. The body feels warmer in humid conditions. The opposite is true when the relative humidity decreases because the rate of perspiration increases. The body feels cooler in arid (dry) conditions.

Source: *What is the heat index?* (weather.gov)

Seniors and Heat Stress

Older adults do not adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in temperature.

Seniors 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 affect the body's ability to control its temperature or sweat.

- Stay cool, stay hydrated
- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible. If your home doesn't have air conditioning, contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.

- Do not rely on a fan as your main cooling source when it's really hot outside.
- Drink more water than usual and don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- If your doctor limits the amount of fluids you drink or has you on water pills, ask them how much you should drink during hot weather.
- Don't use the stove or oven to cook—it will make you and your house hotter.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take cool showers or baths to cool down.
- Do not engage in very strenuous activities and get plenty of rest.
- Check on a friend or neighbor and have someone do the same for you.
- Follow additional tips on how to prevent heat-related illness.
- Stay informed; check the local news for health and safety updates.

Seek medical care immediately if you, or someone you know has symptoms of heat-related illness like muscle cramps, headaches, nausea or vomiting.

Source: *Heat Stress in Older Adults | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC; Caregiving in the Comfort of Home*



Check in on seniors.

Article continues
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Heat Stroke & Heat Exhaustion

It is important that seniors who are particularly susceptible to hyperthermia and other heat-related illnesses, know how to safeguard against problems. Air conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. When the body is unable to control its temperature, it rises rapidly and sweating mechanisms fail. Body temperature may rise to 106°F or higher within 10–15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided. *Heat exhaustion* is less severe, more common, and occurs when the body becomes severely dehydrated. If left untreated, it leads to heat stroke. If you suspect a person is having a problem with the heat, err on the side of caution and insist they get into shade and cool down.

Signs of Heat Exhaustion

- Heavy sweating, cold, clammy skin
- Dizziness or fainting
- A weak and rapid pulse
- Muscle cramps
- Fast, shallow breathing
- Nausea, vomiting or both

Signs of Heat Stroke

- High body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness, nausea, confusion
- Unconsciousness

These are signs of a *life-threatening* emergency. **Have someone call 911** while you begin cooling the person:

- Get him to a shady area.
- Cool him rapidly, however you can: Immerse him in a cool tub of water or shower; spray him with cool water from a garden hose; sponge him with cool water; wrap him in a cool, wet sheet and fan him vigorously.
- Monitor body temperature; continue cooling efforts until body temperature drops to 101–102°F.
- If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the ER for further instructions.
- If he is conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

Source: American Heart Association; Department of Health and Human Services; Caregiving in the Comfort of Home

Taking Care of Yourself— Change Negative Self Talk

We all have “tapes” that play in our head, whether we’re aware of them or not. They are the things we tell ourselves out of habit, sometimes habits formed in childhood. For a couple days, write down the thoughts that you catch flowing into your head. See how many of them are positive, and how many are negative. Then, consciously try replacing any negative thoughts with positive, encouraging ones. You’ll feel better almost instantly.

Optimist



"Good morning, Lord."

Pessimist



"Good Lord, morning"

Inspiration

Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes its place.

—Mark Twain

Memory Care - Use Cues from the Life Story

Remind the person of places and things from his own life and remind him of his successes. For example, "Let's go for a stroll at the park. I know how much you enjoyed working and hiking outdoors."

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

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supplement it. The publisher assumes no
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SAFETY TIPS— Cool Your House

Swap out your lights – Incandescent lights are hotter; swap them for energy-efficient LED ones. Keep the lights off to fight heat.

Cool the room with ice – Put a frozen gallon jug of water on a dish to catch drips behind a box fan and position it to blow toward you.

Keep the heat out – Use thick curtains with a white reflective backing for keeping a sun-facing room cool.

Limit your use of appliances – Running the dryer, dishwasher, and oven can produce a lot of heat in the home. Use appliances at night. Dry clothes on a rack.

Use a cooling necktie – Gel-filled Kool ties can make a difference in how comfortable you feel on a blazing-hot day.

Source: 7 Genius Tricks for Staying Cool Without Air Conditioning This Summer (realtor.com)

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“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Older people have an increased risk of developing heat stress because many of them do not have air-conditioning or fans. Some of them may not be aware of *when* to get out of the heat, or they may be physically unable to get out of an overheated home. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. *Heat stroke* is the most serious heat-related illness.
T F
2. Don't use the stove or oven to cook—it will make you and your house hotter.
T F
3. Older adults are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat.
T F
4. When perspiration is evaporated off the body, it effectively reduces the body's temperature.
T F
5. If your doctor limits the amount of fluids you drink or has you on water pills, ask them how much you should drink during hot weather.
T F
6. *Heat exhaustion* is less severe than *heat stroke*, and occurs when the body becomes severely dehydrated. If left untreated, it leads to *heat stroke*.
T F
7. If your home doesn't have air conditioning, contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.
T F
8. The body does not feel cooler in arid (dry) conditions.
T F
9. High body temperature (above 103°F); red, hot, dry skin (no sweating); and rapid strong pulse are signs of heat stroke.
T F
10. Air conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____