

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Heat Stroke – Staying Safe

Regardless of where we live on the planet, humans maintain a consistent internal temperature around 98°F in order for our systems to function properly. Sweat is one of the body's most powerful tools to maintain a safe internal temperature. When the body gets too hot, it begins to sweat to cool itself off. **When sweat evaporates into the air, heat from our skin goes with it, cooling us off.** If the perspiration is not able to evaporate, the body cannot regulate its temperature. Evaporation is a cooling process. 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 dry conditions.

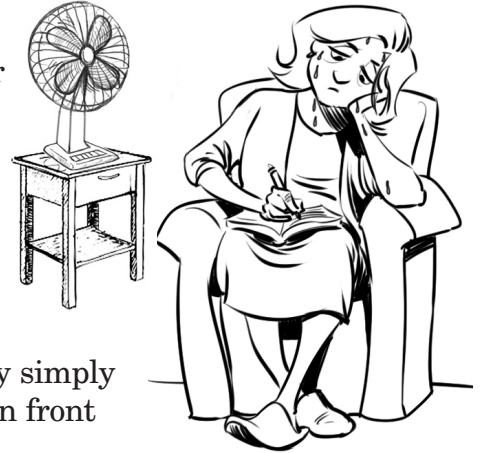
Seniors and Heat Stress

The elderly and those with long-term medical and mental health conditions are also more vulnerable to heat. The elderly may not have the same warning signs and may not recognize that they are dehydrated until it is too late. Their sweating mechanism weakens, and they may be taking medicines or have a chronic medical condition that interferes with their ability to regulate their temperature and sweat.

➔ **Stay in air-conditioned buildings** as much as possible. If your

home doesn't have air conditioning, locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.

- ➔ If you have a fan, you can make it work harder for you and **cool the room down** even further by simply placing a bowl of ice in front of it.
- ➔ Gel-filled **Kool neck ties** can make you more comfortable.
- ➔ **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 her how much you should drink during hot Weather. **Avoid alcohol.**
- ➔ **Wear cooler clothing** – loose, light-weight, and light-colored clothing.
- ➔ **Cool down with cool showers** and baths.
- ➔ **Avoid strenuous activities** and get plenty of rest.
- ➔ **Check on neighbors** and have someone do the same for you.
- ➔ **Stay informed**; check the local news for health and safety updates.
- ➔ **Cool your house** with energy-efficient LED lights. Use thick curtains with a white reflective backing for keeping a sun-facing room cool. Don't use the stove or oven to cook—it will make you and your house hotter.



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

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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

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call 911 while you begin cooling the person:

- Get him to a cool or 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; pack ice under arms and between legs, 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: WebMD Health News How Heat Kills: Deadly Weather 'Cooking' People From Within; American Heart Association; Department of Health and Human Services; Caregiving in the Comfort of Home

Taking Care of Yourself— **Insomnia and Depression**

Depression in the elderly is often misdiagnosed as dementia or Alzheimer's and some health care professionals may mistakenly think that depression is normal for the elderly. Seniors are often under-treated for depression and other mental health problems. However, depression can and should be treated when it occurs, since untreated depression can delay recovery or worsen outcomes for other illnesses. Nearly half of all people with depression report trouble sleeping, and people with insomnia are nearly twice as likely to be depressed. Curing insomnia in people with depression could double their chance of a full recovery.



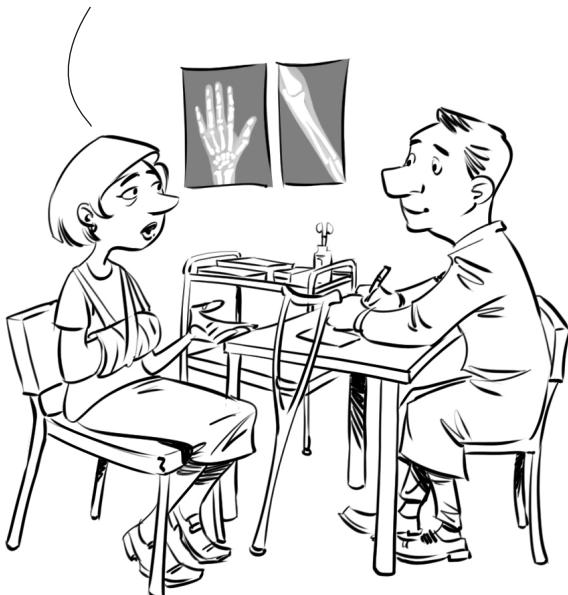
Provide foods high in liquid such as soup and watermelon.

Inspiration

You can only go as fast as the slowest part of you can go.
—Bonnie Raitt, Singer

Live Life Laughing!

I understand what you are saying, but I just don't know what you mean.



Memory Care - Alzheimer's and Dehydration

People with Alzheimer's are more likely to experience dehydration. They often forget to drink, have difficulty swallowing, or may not be able to express their needs. Some may avoid taking fluids if they are incontinent. Dehydration is a major reason why many adults suffering from dementia are treated in the emergency room.

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.

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SAFETY TIPS— Hot Weather and Heart Disease

The risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke increase when the humidity is above 70 percent and the temperature is above 70° F.

If you sweat too much, your blood volume is *decreased*. That means your heart has to pump even harder to get this smaller volume of blood to your working muscles, skin and the other body parts. When you lose too much fluid, your body temperature rises, and your nervous system doesn't work properly. Extreme fluid loss can lead to brain and heart damage.

A good way to monitor your body fluid level is to weigh yourself every morning after using the bathroom. If you weigh two pounds less than normal in the morning, you're probably dehydrated and need to drink more water.

Know the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If any symptoms appear, stop and cool down immediately by dousing your-self with cold water. You may need to get medical attention. **Heat exhaustion can progress quickly to heat stroke, which can kill.**

Source: American Heart Association

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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

Many older people 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. They are in increased risk for heat illness. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Older adults are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat.
T F
2. *Heat stroke* is the most serious heat-related illness.
T F
3. If you sweat too much, your total blood volume is *decreased*, which means your heart has to pump even harder to get a smaller volume of blood to your working muscles, skin and the other body parts.
T F
4. If your doctor limits the amount of fluids you drink or has you on water pills, ask her how much you should drink during hot weather.
T F
5. *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
6. If your home doesn't have air conditioning, contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.
T F
7. The body does *not* feel cooler in dry conditions.
T F
8. High body temperature (above 103°F); red, hot, dry skin (no sweating); and rapid strong pulse are signs of *heat stroke*.
T F
9. Air conditioning is *not* the best protection against heat-related illness and death.
T F
10. When perspiration is evaporated off the body, it effectively reduces the body's temperature.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____