

SENIOR LIVING GUIDE

What Seniors Need to Know about Heat Stress

» BY JULIE ROSE

Temperatures above 90 degrees are considered dangerous for older adults, especially when accompanied by high humidity levels.

Adults age 65 and older are more prone to heat stress than younger adults. This is because seniors do not adjust to temperature changes as well as younger people;



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they are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat; they are more likely to take prescription medications that affect their body's ability to control its temperature, and seniors' sweat glands don't produce as much as they once did so they don't sweat adequately.

SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STRESS

If you get too hot, you can get very sick. It's important to know the symptoms

when your body is overheating and when you need to seek medical care. These include:

- Muscle cramping
- Unusually heavy sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Weakness
- Nausea

Watch closely for these symptoms of overheating on hot days.

STAY INSIDE, STAY COOL AND STAY HYDRATED

When the weather is hot, it's best for you to:

- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as you possibly can. If you don't have air conditioning in your home, you can contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.
- Don't rely on a fan as your primary cooling source when it's hot outside as it's not effective.
- Drink more water than usual and be



When outdoors in hot weather, drink more water than usual and be sure not to wait until you're thirsty to drink.

sure not to wait until you're thirsty to drink. If your doctor limits the amount of fluids you can drink or has you taking water pills, ask him or her how much you should drink during hot weather.

- Limit beverages that are high in sugar, sodium and caffeine and avoid alcohol.
- When cooking with the stove or oven, be sure to turn off the heat as soon as your meal is cooked as the heat from these appliances will make

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 be sure you get plenty of rest.
- Keep your pets inside as heat is dangerous for them too.
- Ask a friend or neighbor to check in on you and do the same for them.

IF YOU HAVE TO BE OUTSIDE IN THE HEAT

If it's absolutely necessary for you to be outside in the heat, be sure that you spend as much time as possible in the shade and take breaks whenever you can. It's best to do outdoor activities during the coolest part of the day or in the evening.

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