Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.
Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio

www.aaa7.org   **Helping You Age _Better_!**

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Heat Waves and Storms - Stay Cool, Stay Safe

High humidity and elevated nighttime temperatures are key ingredients in causing heat-related illness and mortality. Heat stress occurs when the body is unable to cool itself effectively. Normally, the body can cool itself through sweating, but when humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, potentially leading to heat stroke. When there's no break from the heat at night, it can lead to health problems, and pose special health risks to the poor, older adults and people with chronic medical conditions. It is important that seniors know how to safeguard against the risks. Air conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death. Visit senior centers, movie theaters, libraries or malls to cool off—even for just a few hours. 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.
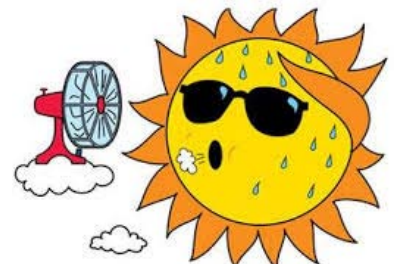
Signs of Heat Stroke
- High body temperature (above 103°F) • Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating) • Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache • Dizziness, nausea, confusion • Unconsciousness

These are signs of a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call 911 while you begin cooling the person:
- Get the person to a shady area.
- Cool the person rapidly, however you can: immerse them in a cool tub of water or shower; spray them with cool water from a garden hose; sponge the person with cool water; wrap them in a cool, wet sheet and fan the person vigorously.
- Monitor body temperature; continue cooling efforts until body temperature drops to 101–102°F.
- If the person is conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

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

Source: *Department of Health and Human Services; Caregiving in the Comfort of Home*

Storm Readiness

Recovering from an emergency or a natural disaster tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation done today. Talk to the doctor to determine if the person in your care needs to be admitted to a hospital prior to the emergency. In addition to the standard supplies of food, water and first aid kits (listed on Red Cross or FEMA websites), consider additional precautions:

- Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers. Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary medical equipment.
- List the type and model numbers of medical devices, like oxygen tanks and wheelchairs.
- Note medications that require refrigeration and have a cooler chest and frozen ice packs ready.
- If the person in your care is in a wheelchair or has mobility problems, plan for how they will evacuate. Have a manual wheelchair as a backup for a motorized one.
- Be prepared to bring your own durable medical equipment to an evacuation shelter.
- For blind or visually impaired persons, keep an extra cane by the bed and attach a whistle to it.
- For hearing impaired, store hearing aids in a container attached to the nightstand or bed post, so they can be located quickly.
- Have ID information for the person as well as copies of emergency documents, evacuation plans and emergency health information card.
- Ask your doctor about stocking up on a week's supply of all prescription medication.
- Make sure everyone knows where the first-aid kit and emergency supplies are located.

Source: CDC; FEMA

Memory Care

Monitor the person in your care. Remember, they may not be able to tell you when they are becoming over-heated, or may not be able to express their discomfort, especially if suffering from dementia or diabetes, which diminishes sensation. Alcohol and some medications, such as tranquilizers, can dull an individual's awareness of discomfort.

Taking Care of Yourself

Increase Your Energy

Being a caregiver, whether you are young or a grandparent, is tough and you are under physical and emotional stress. It is important to avoid foods that tend to make you anxious and more stressed. Try to:

1. *Drink plenty of water.*
2. *Have extra Vitamin C, such as a glass of orange juice.*
3. *Eat fruit, whole grain breads, and pastas for energy.*
4. *Avoid sweetened drinks, colas, coffee, and tea which can make you jumpy and provide no nutrition.*
5. *Avoid alcohol. It places more stress on your body in the long run.*

Remember to take care of YOU!

DEHYDRATION

As a person ages, he or she feels less thirsty, so a special effort should be made to provide fluids to prevent dehydration. A person's fluid balance can be affected by medication and emotional stress.

Upcoming Wellness Classes

Gallia County - Starting August 7th (Falls Management)
Jackson County - Starting August 7th (Falls Management)
Lawrence County - Starting August 1st (Chronic Disease Self-Management)
Lawrence County - Starting August 6th (Chronic Pain Self-Management)
Pike County - Starting August 1st (Chronic Disease Self-Management)
Pike County - Starting August 3rd (Tools for Caregivers)
Pike County - Starting September 4th (Falls Management)
Ross County - Starting September 26th (Chronic Disease Self-Management)
Scioto County - Starting August 6th (Chronic Pain Self-Management)
Scioto County - Starting September 4th (Chronic Disease Self-Management)

Call 1-800-582-7277, extension 247 or 284, to learn more or to register.
Log on to www.aaa7.org to download our 2018 Wellness Calendar to learn more about wellness classes provided through the AAA7 to those age 60 and over at no cost.

Safety Tips - Keep Food Safe

It's easier for bacteria to grow on food in hot summer months. Older people get sick easier from germs in food. Always wash your own hands and the hands of the person in your care with warm soapy water before preparing or serving food. Dry hands with a paper towel.

- Discard all foods that are past the expiration date on the label.
- Never leave meats out at room temperature.
- Thoroughly cook all red meat and fish at 300˚ F or more.
- Cook hamburgers or chopped meat until the juices run clear.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Cook eggs until the yolks are no longer runny and never serve raw eggs in drinks.
- Never serve oysters, clams, or shellfish raw.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and cider.
- Be careful if you use the microwave oven. Make sure the food has no cold spots that let germs live. Stir the food for even cooking.