

# 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*

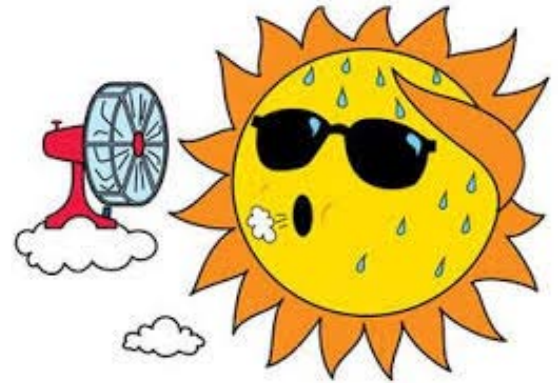
[www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org) **Helping You Age Better!**



**AUGUST 2020**

## **Heat Waves and Dehydration**

Dehydration and heat stroke are common heat-related diseases that can be life-threatening if left untreated. If the temperature or humidity is going up or an air pollution alert is in effect, you are at increased risk for a heat-related illness. Play it safe by checking the weather report before going outside.



Heat-related illness occurs when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating isn't enough and a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs. When both the temperature and humidity are high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. Old age, youth (age 0–4), obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use are other risk factors for heat-related illness.

### **Heat Stroke and Heat Exhaustion**

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.

### **Signs of Heat Stroke**

- Extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

These are signs of a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call 911 while you begin cooling the person (please turn to Page 2 to read what best to do and how to cool the person).

## Heat Waves and Dehydration...continued from Page 1

- Move them 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 them with cool water; or, if the humidity is low, wrap them in a cool, wet sheet and fan them 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 the person is conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or other non-alcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

### Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much fluid. This can happen either when a person doesn't drink enough, or when they lose large amounts of fluid through diarrhea, vomiting, sweating or exercise. A severely dehydrated body no longer has enough fluid to get blood to vital organs. This can cause shock, a life-threatening condition. Because older adults don't feel thirst as much, make a special effort to provide the person in your care with enough fluids. A person's fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health and weather. Dehydration, especially in older adults, can increase confusion and muscle weakness and cause nausea. Nausea, in turn, will prevent the person from eating or drinking, causing more dehydration.

Older adults can become dehydrated because they may:

- Have kidneys that do not work well.
- Choose not to drink because of incontinence.
- Have physical problems that make it hard to drink or hold a glass, find it painful or exhausting to walk to the bathroom, or have difficulty with communication.
- Take medicines that increase urine output.

## Stay Hydrated, Stay Safe!

- ✓ Drink: Drinking plenty of water is key to staying healthy in the heat. During hot weather, drink more liquid than your thirst indicates. Increase fluid intake, regardless of activity level. Avoid drinks containing alcohol, caffeine and sugar because they actually cause you to lose more fluid. If a doctor limits fluid intake, make sure to ask how much to drink when it is hot.
- ✓ Keep drinks cool, not cold, which causes stomach cramps.
- ✓ Wear loose clothing which helps air to circulate around your skin, allowing sweat to evaporate and cool your body.
- ✓ Stay out of the sun.
- ✓ Wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen: sunburned skin hampers your body's ability to cool off. Know the symptoms of heat exhaustion: fatigue, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle cramps, and irritability. If you notice any of these symptoms, take a break and drink water.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; WebMD; MayoClinic.com; MedicineNet

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## **Stop the COVID-19 Virus**

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you should especially clean hands after you have been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people, such as door handles, tables, gas pumps, shopping carts, or electronic cashier registers/screens, etc. Also wash hands before touching your eyes, nose or mouth because that's how germs enter our bodies.



Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:

- Touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands.
- Touch a contaminated surface or objects.
- Blow your nose, cough or sneeze into hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects.

Source: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

## **Memory Care - Glass of Water**

All older adults are at risk for dehydration, but this risk increases for people with Alzheimer's. Besides forgetting to drink, people with Alzheimer's may not be able to communicate their needs or have difficulty swallowing. If they are incontinent, they may avoid fluids. A major cause of emergency room visits for frail or demented older adults is dehydration.

## **Interested in a Telephone Support Group for Caregivers?**

The Caregiver Support Program at the Area Agency on Aging District 7 is offering a free telephone support group for caregivers.

**Upcoming Calls: August 20th and September 17th  
from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**

If you are interested, please call Vicki Woyan for more details. Vicki can be reached at:

**[1-800-582-7277](tel:1-800-582-7277), extension 215 or you can e-mail [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).**



## **Census 2020: Everyone Counts**

This year, there are four options to completing the Census - online, by phone, by mailing a paper questionnaire, or by responding in person. By this time, you have either received an invitation encouraging you to respond online, or an invitation with a paper questionnaire. These invitations were sent from the Census Bureau starting in March. Additional reminders have been sent since to encourage participation.

## **There is still time to complete your Census if you have not yet done so!**

Participating in the Census is a part of our civic duty and important to make sure our district has fair representation and appropriate funding based on our population. For more information, log onto [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) or call 1-800-923-8282. There is also additional information in this month's newsletter insert.



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*Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*

## **Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way**

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs and COVID-19. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community. Follow these five steps every time:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



Source: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

*Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.*