

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!**

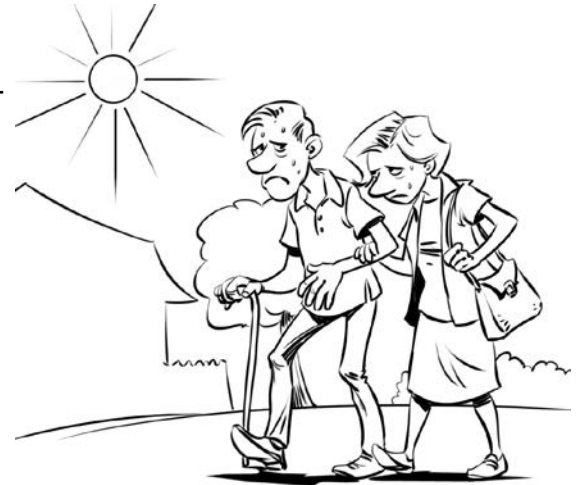


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Heat Waves

More Americans are killed by hot weather than by any other natural disaster. In spite of warnings and continued education about prevention and management of heat stroke, casualties continue to increase.

Experts predict that the worsening summer heat waves, which are becoming more frequent and intense, may lead to more illnesses and deaths. They place people, young or old, active or sedentary, at risk of a heat-related illnesses and death.



Heat-Related Illness

Heat illness or hyperthermia occurs when there is an unusual increase in core body temperature. Unlike fever, it does not respond to medications. It is; therefore, extremely important to recognize early symptoms of heat exhaustion.

Your risk of developing heat-related illness increases with the heat index, which is a combination of air temperature and humidity. High humidity makes sweat roll off your skin without evaporating or cooling the body. Wearing too much clothing in warm temperatures also increases your risk of being ill.

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 move out of the heat, or they may be physically unable to get out of an overheated home.

Other factors that increase one's risk of heat-related illnesses include dehydration, which is common among the elderly, and the use of certain medications such as beta blockers and anticholinergics. Obese individuals, and those with fever, heart disease, poor circulation, mental illness, and sunburn are also at risk for heat-related illness.

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.

One way to help prevent dehydration in all seniors is to use a buddy system. Have a relative, friend or neighbor check on them at least twice a day during a heat wave. Make sure they are able to take enough fluids and are able to stay in a cool place. Watch out for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

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 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

- Extremely 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:

- Move them to a shady area.
- Cool them 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 they are conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or non-alcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

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



“Volunteers aren’t paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.” - Anonymous

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Managing Your Fatigue

Fatigue is a common problem for people who are recovering from illness. Here are three ways to manage fatigue and have a better quality of life:

- Find out why you are experiencing fatigue by keeping a diary to record specific activities that may be causing your fatigue. This will help you discuss with your doctor what you normally do during the day so that they can help identify what causes your fatigue and suggest new ways to manage your daily routine.
- Plan your daily activities. This is important to help minimize your stress and fatigue. Write down everything you might need for the day, and make sure you include your medications, food, and water.
- Eat energy-packed foods, especially if you have a lot of activities during the day. High energy foods can help prevent fatigue. These include walnuts, dark chocolate, and tea.



Source: Three Strategies for Combating Post-Stroke Fatigue; StrokeSmart Magazine

Live Life Laughing



Q: What does a bee do when it is so hot?

A: He takes off his yellow jacket!

Don't Fall - Be Safe!

Poor diet or not drinking enough fluids (water) increases the risk of falling. In addition, the dizziness, as a sign of heat exhaustion, can cause a fall.

Using a Buddy System

Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness. People who are 65 or older should have someone check on them twice a day during a heat wave.



Oops!!

In last month's issue for June, a line was accidentally cut off from the last bullet point in the section for "Property Maintenance Before Disaster Strikes." Below is the complete sentence.

- Floods or Heavy Rain - Clear all exterior drains, clear gutters, and make sure the sump pump works, if you have them.



Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

F32-URG, PO Box 500 • 160 Dorsey Drive • Rio Grande, OH 45674-0500

Toll-Free Number: (800) 582-7277 • TTY: 711 (Relay Ohio)

Website: www.aaa7.org • E-Mail: info@aaa7.org • Facebook: www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7

Safety Tips - *Stay Hydrated, Stay Safe*

While being properly hydrated is always important, in summer heat, it can be lifesaving. Our natural sense of thirst diminishes with age, so it is important to drink water “by the clock,” as you would schedule crucial medications. This allows better absorption of nutrients from foods as well as medications, and reduces the risk of dehydration. Dehydration, especially in the elderly, can increase confusion and muscle weakness and cause nausea. Nausea, in turn, will prevent the person from wanting to eat, thereby causing more dehydration.

Prevent dehydration by:

- Encouraging the intake of 6-8 cups of liquid every day (or an amount determined by the doctor).
- Serving beverages at room temperature.
- Providing foods with high water content (watermelon, soups).
- Avoiding caffeine and alcohol, which cause frequent urination and dehydration.



Source: NIH News In Health, Department of Health and Human Services; CDC