

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!**



AUGUST 2011

Exposure to Extreme Heat - *Is It Hotter or What!?*

Dehydration and heat stroke are common heat-related diseases that can be life-threatening if left untreated.

Heat-related illness occurs when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. The body normally cools itself by sweating; however, 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
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

These are signs of a life-threatening emergency. **Have someone call 911** while you begin cooling the person:

- Take them to a shady area.
- Cool them rapidly however you can. Immerse in a cool tub of water or shower; spray with cool water from a garden hose; sponge with cool water; or, if the humidity is low, wrap in a cool, wet sheet and fan vigorously.

- Monitor body temperature. Continue cooling efforts until body temperature drops to 101–102°F.
- If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the Emergency Room for further instructions.
- If they are

conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or other non-alcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

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; and 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 you should drink when it is hot.*

• **Keep drinks cool, not cold, which causes stomach cramps.**

• **Wear loose clothing** which helps air

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Exposure to Extreme Heat

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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** - Symptoms of heat exhaustion include 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

**Don't Fall -
Be Safe!**

During hot weather, we need to drink more water. Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark? Install a night-light so that you can see where you're walking.



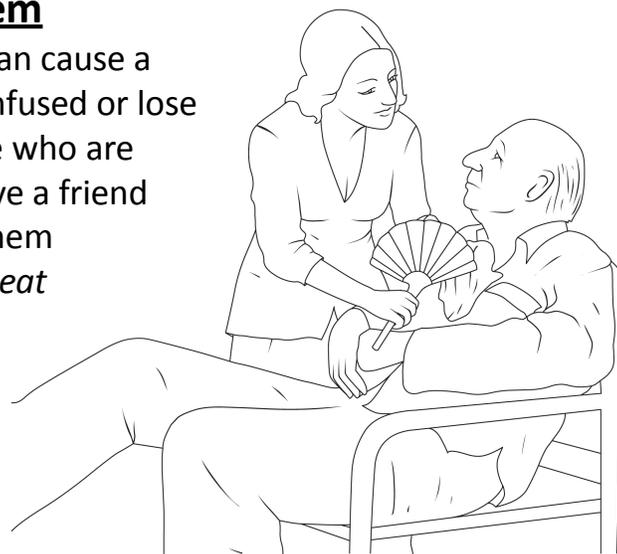
**It's as Simple
as a Glass of Water**

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.



Use a Buddy System

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



Knowing life is short, how can we quarrel? - Buddha

Taking Care of Yourself - Managing Anger

Anger occurs when we perceive something as unfair. Anger is at the heart of at least 80 percent of the problems for which people seek professional, therapeutic advice. Sometimes we are aware of angry feelings, while other times, we're not. Feelings can create muscle tension, headaches, pain, or high blood pressure. Controlled breathing is a quick way to strengthen your self-control so that you can reduce the intensity of your anger. If anger is affecting your well-being, and those around you:

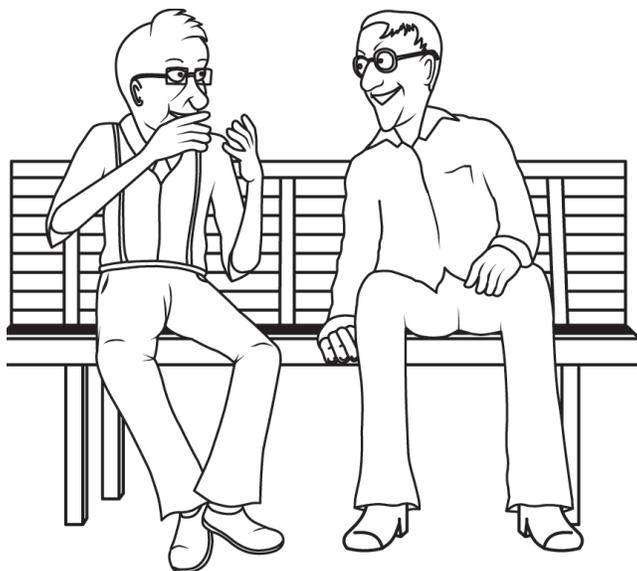
- Find a physical outlet like walking, yoga, swimming or housework.
- Use positive self-talk and write about your feelings in a journal.
- Practice seeing humor in situations instead of feeling resentment.
- Call a sympathetic friend to talk through your feelings.
- Seek professional counseling.

Need a Speaker for a Group?

We love speaking to community groups! Call us at **1-800-582-7277** if you would like us to share the story of home and community-based long-term care services with others who might be interested in learning more.



Live Life Laughing



"I learned long ago, it's *minor* surgery when they do it on someone else."

Note to Self: Find Air Conditioning

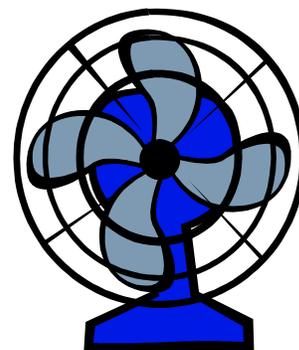
Air conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death.

Visit senior centers, movie theaters, libraries or malls to cool off - even a few hours helps reduce the effects of heat exposure.

Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is above 90, fans will not prevent heat-related illness.

A cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/aging





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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 nurse or social worker 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.

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 send blood to vital organs. This can cause *shock*, a life-threatening condition. Because older adults do not feel thirst as much, make a special effort to provide the person in your care with enough fluids. The fluid balance of older adults 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 older adults 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 communicating.
- Take *medicines* that increase urine output.

Source: WebMD; MayoClinic.com; MedicineNet