

## Hot Weather Safety Tips for Older Adults

While summer brings us warmth and bloom, prolonged exposure to excessive heat in summer months can be dangerous. This is especially true for older adults. Every summer, more than 600 Americans die of health problems caused by excessive heat and humidity. Older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions are at high risk of developing heat-related illnesses, because of aging-related physical changes in the body, chronic health conditions, and even effects of taking some medications.

### Staying Safe When It's Too Darn Hot

80°

When the temperature climbs above 80°F, older adults need to be proactive and take precautions to avoid ailments due to excessive heat. Keep in mind the following tips when trying to stay cool.

■ **STAY AWAY** from direct sun exposure as much as possible. If possible, plan your outdoor activities either early in the morning or when the sun starts to set.

■ **AIR CONDITIONING** is your friend in summer. Spend as much time as possible in air conditioned spaces. If you don't have an air conditioner, go somewhere that is air-conditioned. For example, you may read a book at the library, walk around in indoor malls, watch that new movie at the theater, or meet your friends at the senior center. (Note: The federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps adults 65 and older who have limited incomes cover the cost of air conditioners and utility bills. To reach your state's LIHEAP program, call 1-866-674-6327.)

■ **STAY HYDRATED.** Drink plenty of cool water, clear juices, and other liquids that don't contain alcohol or caffeine. Alcohol and caffeine cause you to lose water in your body by making you urinate more.

■ **DRESS APPROPRIATELY.** Whenever you can, try wearing loose, light-colored clothes. Avoid dark-colored clothes as they may absorb heat. Top it off with a lightweight, broad-brimmed hat and you are dressing like a pro! These simple changes will help you both stay cool and avoid sunburn.

■ **DID SOMEONE SAY SUNBURN?** Buy a broad spectrum sunscreen lotion or spray with sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Apply the sunscreen liberally to all exposed skin. Also, bugs are abundant in summer, so spray insect repellent when going outdoors.

■ **COOL DOWN!** Take tepid (not too cold or too hot) showers, baths, or sponge baths when you're feeling warm. Don't have the time? Then wet washcloths or towels with cool water and put them on your wrists, ankles, armpits, and neck.