

# Tips on Keeping **Cool** in the **Summer Heat**

*Senior Citizens are more susceptible to the effects of heat, as their bodies return to normal slowly, and their bodies' cooling mechanism is not as efficient as younger people's.*

**Drink Fluids:** Seniors are particularly vulnerable in hot weather to heat exhaustion or worse. Dehydration from the body accelerates during the summer months, and some medications whose side effects include loss of fluid and electrolytes from the body can prove dangerous. It has been found that some diuretics, antibiotics and other medications can slow down the body's natural capacity to control body temperature.

Seniors should avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages as much as possible as they accelerate dehydration.

Drink plenty of water, also the popular sports drinks can replenish needed salts that are lost through sweating.

**Plan Ahead:** Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, cool clothing (preferably cotton) and use head coverings like hats or caps. Use sunblock (30+) and avoid direct sun as much as possible by seeking out shaded spots.

**Work the Split Shift:** Work earlier in the day. Work in the shade whenever possible and between the hours of 5am and 9am and 5pm and 9pm, if the middle of the day is predicted to be over 90 degrees.

**Signs of Trouble:** Signs of dehydration or heat exhaustion are less pronounced in seniors due to aging, certain medications and chronic conditions. Symptoms of heat stroke will become pretty obvious, but may mimic a heart attack or other coronary event. Watch out for a feeling of being overheated and dizziness. As it progresses, you may notice you are no longer sweating, and your skin feels flush. After that, your heart rate will speed up, you may throw up, and you will become disoriented. The results can be seizure or, in some cases, death. Consult your doctor immediately if you or your loved one experiences any of the following symptoms:

1. **Development of hot dry skin with inability to sweat**
2. **Confusion or disorientation**
3. **Vomiting**
4. **Fainting or loss of consciousness**

The faster anyone moves, the faster your body gets heated up. Hence seniors should take it slow in the summer, especially when it is hot.

**Out on the Town:** Visit public buildings with air conditioning during the hottest hours of the day if the heat becomes unbearable. Libraries, shopping malls and movie theaters can all be good places to cool down.

**Cool Water:** Fill buckets or basins and soak your feet. Wet towels and bandanas can have a cooling effect when worn on the shoulders or head. Take cool showers or baths, and consider using a spray bottle filled with cold water for refreshing spritzes throughout the day.

**Don't Heat the House:** Eat fresh foods that do not require you to use the oven or stove to prepare. Ride the Senior Van to the Enumclaw Senior Activity Center to eat lunch Monday through Friday.

**Remember Fido:** Remember, that pets also suffer when the temperature rises. Cooling animals (dogs, rabbits, cats) by giving them a "cool" bath or shower will help keep their body temperature down. A cool towel on a tile floor to lay on, a cool towel or washcloth laying over the skin next to a fan will also help cool the animal. Make sure they have plenty of cool water to drink as well. Signs of heat stroke in a pet are: rapid panting, wide eyes, lots of drooling, hot skin, twitching muscles, vomiting and a dazed look. Call your vet if you think your pet has a heat stroke.

This information taken from the American Red Cross/Humane Society/www.livestrong.com

Provided by : Enumclaw Senior Center 1350 Cole Street Open 7am to 4pm Monday –Thursday Come Cool Off!