

10 Ways to Help Seniors Beat the Heat

The dog days of summer are far from over—make sure the older adult in your life enjoys the weather safely with these tips:



- 1. Trust the thermostat.** They say that when you get older, you get colder—and science backs it up. Changes in the body with age result in older folks having a hard time telling when it's too hot. If your loved one is considering a sweater on a 95-degree day, they may need a gentle reminder that the weather actually calls for something lighter.
- 2. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!** Older adults need lots of water, especially when it's hot. If you're dehydrated, you can't sweat as much, and if you can't sweat, you can't cool off. Make sure any outing with an older adult includes bottled water aplenty.
- 3. Make sure you're acclimated.** Like altitude, temperature is something your body needs to get used to before engaging in strenuous activity. If you've just moved to warmer climes, your body may not fully adjust to the difference in temperature for several weeks.
- 4. Take a siesta.** The hottest times of day—between noon and 3:00 PM—should be spent indoors, or at least in the shade. If you can, plan strenuous activities for the early morning or later in the evening to avoid the worst the summer sun has to offer.
- 5. Read your medications' warning labels.** Do you know all of your meds' side effects? If you take medicine that constricts your blood vessels (Sudafed, some migraine medications), controls your blood pressure by inhibiting adrenaline (i.e., beta-blockers), or cause you to urinate more frequently (diuretics like furosemide), you need to be extra careful about staying hydrated in the heat. Ask your pharmacist if you're not sure.
- 6. Know the signs of heatstroke and heat exhaustion.** Unusual fatigue, dizziness, nausea, flushed skin, a racing heartbeat and—paradoxically—a lack of sweating can be indications that someone is experiencing heatstroke. Keep an eye out when the temperature's rising—if your older loved one appears agitated, they may need to cool off.
- 7. Keep the car running.** The inside of a car can shoot up 20 degrees in just 10 minutes if left in the sun (or even in the shade). Keep the older adult in your life safe in the car—make sure the air conditioner is on if you're parked for an extended period.
- 8. Be aware of underlying conditions.** Hypertension, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle can all contribute to adverse reactions to heat. Don't push it if you know your loved one is at a greater risk for heat exhaustion.
- 9. Wear lightweight clothing, and opt for lightweight masks if possible.** Surgical masks are effective and airy, whereas some cloth masks can be stuffy and uncomfortable in extreme heat.
- 10. Check-in!** Make sure older adults in your life aren't facing a heatwave alone. Regular wellness checks will ensure your loved one stays hydrated, safe and feeling cared-for as they beat the heat.



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