



# Summer Safety Tips for Older Adults



The sunny skies and warm weather of summer make this time of year the ideal season for spending time outdoors. As individuals age, the ability to adjust to temperature changes and hot weather may also be impacted. By being aware of some health and safety precautions, older adults can safely enjoy outdoor activities with everyone else.

## Stay Hydrated

As people age, the ability to conserve water and adjust to temperature changes decreases. This makes older adults more susceptible to becoming dehydrated in warmer temperatures. It is recommended to drink between 6 to 8 cups of water a day. Avoid caffeinated beverages. If spending time in the sun or being physically active increase water consumption. Sport drinks can assist in replacing electrolytes for those who have been sweating.

## Keep Cool

When temperatures reach their peak in mid-day, it is important older adults and those with chronic medical conditions have a cool place to go rest. If you do not have an air conditioned home, keep the hot air out during the warmest time of day by keeping shades and blinds closed. Shutting windows and doors may also help. When temperatures cool down in the evening use an oscillating fan or open doors and windows to create a cross-breeze. Consider seeking refuge in an air conditioned location such as: the local seniors' centre, library, recreational centre, or shopping mall.

## Protect your Skin

Wear appropriate clothing - clothing made from natural fabrics traps less heat than those made from synthetics. Light cotton shirts and shorts are good choices. Loose fitting clothing allows heat to escape, and light colors absorb less heat from the sun. A hat helps keep the sun off one's head and face. Sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 15 is recommended for all, regardless of age. Many skin products containing sunscreen are readily available. Wear sunglasses to prevent damage to your eyes from UV rays emitted from the sun. Use a good bug spray to keep mosquitoes and other disease carrying bugs away.

## Limit Outdoor Exercise

Limit activities such as working in the garden, going for long walks and other forms of outdoor exercise to early morning or evening hours when the sun is not at its peak. Wear appropriate clothing, and stay hydrated while exercising. Keep track of the time to avoid exercising too long and risking exhaustion. Be aware of the forecast and any extreme weather advisories before you head out.

## Recognize Signs of Heat-Induced Illness

Hyperthermia, heat stroke, heat cramps and heat exhaustion are all considered heat-induced illness. Warning signs include: body temperatures that exceed 40 degrees; minimal or no sweating in extreme heat; headache; sudden negative change in mood; flushed or dry skin; nausea and or vomiting; feeling faint; and shortness of breath and or rapid pulse. If any of these signs and symptoms are present escape the heat, apply ice packs to cool the body and seek medical attention if the symptoms persist.

## Check the Side Effects of Medications

Some medications may make individuals more sensitive to the sun. Some medical conditions can make individuals more susceptible to heat related illness. Understand the side effects sun or extreme heat can have on medications or medical conditions, take extra precautions if required.

## Practice Summer Food Safety

Avoid keeping food at room temperature for more than one hour. Marinate meat in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Keep raw meat separate from other foods – never put ready-to-eat food on a plate that contained raw meat. After handling raw meat, clean countertops, cutting boards, utensils, and wash hands with warm soapy water. Use a digital food thermometer to ensure meat is thoroughly cooked.

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## Be aware of your Security Habits:

- Do not leave doors or windows open that can not be monitored - this can make homes vulnerable to potential intruders. Protect property by ensuring all windows and doors are locked even when you are outside in your backyard. If leaving a window open for ventilation, limit the size of the opening by installing a securable window stop. Do not leave windows or sliding doors open when going to sleep or stepping away from home.
- If going away, be sure homes look lived in. Make arrangements to have someone check-in on the house, collect mail, newspapers and flyers.
- Get to know your neighbours. Having an involved and watchful community is one of the best crime prevention resources available. Leave a phone number where you can be contacted with a neighbour so you can be contacted during an emergency.