

DC Office on Aging Sounds Heat Alert for Seniors

IMPORTANT NUMBERS FOR SENIORS DURING HEAT EMERGENCIES

Once a heat advisory or alert has been given, seniors are urged to listen to the broadcast media about the weather conditions. Seniors are urged to follow certain protective measures including: staying indoors, cool places; wearing light clothing; reduce strenuous activities, reschedule appointments if possible; taking a cold or lukewarm bath or shower; and drinking plenty of non-alcoholic liquids. In addition, seniors should keep the air conditioner and/or fan on, even if it is at a low level.

The following are other helpful community resources to be utilized during the heat weather alert or advisory:

IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- **Emergency Assistance 911**

In a life threatening situation contact for Police, Fire and ambulance services. There is a charge for DC ambulance transportation to health care facilities. Medicare Part A recipients can be reimbursed.

- **Hyperthermia/Shelter Hotline (202) 399-7093 or (800) 535-7252**

The hotline offers assistance to persons in need of overnight shelter and support for those living in the streets. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

- **DC Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (202) 442-9557**

If the cooling system is not working in your rental apartment building, notify the property management. If you do not receive a response, you can call the Housing Inspections Office for assistance during business hours. Call the Office of Emergency Management at (202) 727-6161 after hours and weekends.

- **DC Call Center (202) 311**

The main number for DC government to report a problem or get city services information.

- **Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency** (202) 727-6161

This office can give you information about public cooling centers and who to contact for other assistance. For non medical emergency assistance and service information after hours, holidays and weekends. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **D.C. Office on Aging** (202) 724-5626

The Information and Assistance Office can link seniors with needed services and provide you with general information on keeping cool. Also identify program centers that are designated as senior cooling sites. The Office is open Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

UTILITY SERVICES AND REPAIRS

- **D.C. Energy Office Hotline** (202) 673-6750

The hotline is available Monday through Friday 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. and offers information and financial assistance with utilities.

- **PEPCO** (202) 833-7500

To report electrical power outage in your residence. Also, let them know if there are persons in your household with health problems.

- **Washington Gas** (703) 750-1400

To report gas leakage or outage in your residence. Also, let them know if there are persons in your household with health problems.

- **DC Water** (202) 612-3400

Call to report any water problems including bursting of pipes (24 hours a day)

- **Comcast Cable (202) 635-5100**

To report television cable outage.

EMERGENCY RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- **Yellow Pages 411**

If your cooling system or air conditioner goes out inside your private residence, check the yellow pages or call directory assistance for listing of heating and cooling contractors.



Prepared by the DC Office on Aging, 2010

KEEPING OUR SENIORS SAFE DURING EXTREME HOT WEATHER

Periods of extremely hot weather--heat waves--can cause serious health problems for everyone. In fact, among weather-related events, heat waves are a leading cause of death. Seniors are vulnerable when there is extreme heat. The following are commonly asked questions about heat-related conditions and how to safely cope with them.

Why do high air temperatures affect the body?

Normally, the body cools itself by sweating. If temperatures and humidity are extremely high, however, sweating is not effective in maintaining the body's normal temperature. When this happens, blood chemistry can change and internal organs--including the brain and kidneys--can be damaged. Heat also can be stressful if the temperature changes suddenly, since it usually takes several days for the body to adjust to heat.

What are some of the most common heat-related conditions?

The most common heat-related conditions are heatstroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, sunburn and heat rash. Heatstroke and heat exhaustion are the most serious conditions.

What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the

body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails and the body is unable to cool down. Body temperature may rise to 106 degrees F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heatstroke can result from overexposure to direct sunlight, with or without physical activity, or to very high indoor temperatures. It can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.

What are the symptoms of heatstroke and how are they treated?

Symptoms of heatstroke include an extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees F, orally); red, hot and dry skin; rapid pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and unconsciousness.

If symptoms of heatstroke are present, find a cool place, preferably an air-conditioned indoor setting. Outside, find a spot in the shade. Put the person in a semi-sitting position. Loosen his or her clothing and bathe the head and body with COLD water. Seek medical attention immediately.

What is heat exhaustion?

Heat exhaustion can result when too much time is spent in a very warm environment, resulting in excessive sweating without adequate fluid and electrolyte (salt and minerals) replacement. This can occur either indoors or outdoors, with or without exercise.

What are the symptoms of heat exhaustion and how are they treated?

Symptoms of heat exhaustion may include dizziness, headache, nausea, abdominal cramps, shallow breathing, cool and clammy skin, muscle tremors and heavy perspiration.

A person suffering from heat exhaustion should be moved to an air-conditioned environment if possible. If outside, move the person to a shady spot. Loosen the person's clothing and encourage him or her to drink cool, non-alcoholic, decaffeinated beverages. Keep the person quiet. It may be necessary to seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour or if the person has heart problems or high blood pressure. If left untreated, heat exhaustion may progress to heatstroke.

How can I avoid heat exhaustion and heatstroke?

Try to keep cool during extremely hot weather. Stay in a cool environment (preferably air conditioned), drink plenty of fluids--such as water, fruit juices or fruit drinks--and

use common sense. Heat injury may develop with or without feelings of discomfort.

What if I do not have an air conditioner?

Seek out the nearest facility that is air conditioned, such as a cooling shelter, a senior citizen center, a church, libraries, the local YMCA or a public cooling center designated by the city. Even short periods of time in a cool environment will lessen the risk of heat injury. Fans alone will not effectively cool an overheated person when air temperatures are above 100 degrees F.

If you know of older persons staying in extreme heat but being afraid to open windows or to venture out of their homes. In these situations, people may want to contact the Office on Aging for advice and assistance to get to the nearest public cooling center.

What is "plenty of fluids"?

"Plenty of fluids" means at least 1-1/2 to 2 quarts of fluids daily. This can be water, fruit juice, or fruit-flavored or carbonated drinks. Since aging can cause a decreased thirst sensation, elderly persons should drink water, fruit juices or other fruit drinks at regular intervals during the day, even if they do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcoholic beverages and those containing caffeine. Salt tablets are not substitutes for fluids.

What are some good tips on how to avoid heat-related problems?

Use a buddy system. If you are working in the heat, check on coworkers and have someone else do the same for you. If you are at home and are 65 years of age or older or have a chronic health problem, ask a friend, relative or neighbor check on you at least twice a day, even if you have air conditioning. If you know someone who is 65 years of age or older or who has a chronic health problem, check on them at least twice a day.

Limit outdoor activities.

Try to plan activities for the coolest times of the day--before noon and in the evening. When physically active, rest frequently in the shade.

Drink plenty of fluids.

During hot weather, you will need to drink more liquid than your thirst indicates. Even if you remain indoors and limit your activity, your body still needs to replace

lost fluids, salt and minerals. Make an extra effort to drink a minimum of six to eight 8 oz. glasses of cool fluids daily. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink two to four glasses of cool fluids each hour. Parents should be sure young children get sufficient fluids. If you are on a special fluid-restricted diet or if you take diuretics, ask your physician about fluid intake during hot weather.

Protect your body.

Wear as little clothing as possible when indoors, and wear light colored, loose fitting clothing outdoors. When spending time outdoors, avoid direct sunlight, wear a hat and use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) greater than 15 to protect yourself against sunburn.

Never leave children, the elderly or pets in a parked car, not even for just a few minutes.

The air temperature inside a car rises rapidly during hot weather and can lead to brain damage or death.

Limit your cooking.

Reduce your cooking on the stove particularly if you don't have air condition or easy way for heat to leave your home. Use exhaust fan when cooking if possible.

A final reminder--take care of your pets.

In many ways, dogs and cats react to hot weather as humans do. Offer pets extra water and be sure to place the water dish in a shaded area if outdoors. Make sure pets have a protected place where they can get away from the sun.

Air Quality Guide for Ozone

Air Quality Index	Protect Your Health
Good (0-50)	No health impacts are expected when air quality is in this range.
Moderate (51-100)	Unusually sensitive people should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion.

<p>Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101-150)</p>	<p>The following groups should limit prolonged outdoor exertion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lung disease, such as asthma • Children and older adults • People who are active outdoors
<p>Unhealthy (151-200)</p>	<p>The following groups should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lung disease, such as asthma • Children and older adults • People who are active outdoors <p>Everyone else should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.</p>
<p>Very Unhealthy (201-300)</p>	<p>The following groups should avoid all outdoor exertion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lung disease, such as asthma • Children and older adults • People who are active outdoors <p>Everyone else should limit outdoor exertion.</p>

What You Should Know About Ozone and Your Health

- Ozone in the air we breathe can harm our health- particularly on hot, sunny days when ozone can reach unhealthy levels.
- Even relatively low levels of ozone can cause health effects.
- People with lung disease, children, older adults, and people who are active outdoors may be particularly sensitive to ozone.
- Ozone exposure may also increase the risk of premature death from heart or lung disease.
- This fact sheet tells you how you can find out when air quality is unhealthy and take simple steps to protect your health.

A L E R T TO SENIOR SERVICE NETWORK AGENCIES

THE D.C. OFFICE ON AGING HAS BEEN NOTIFIED THAT A HEAT ADVISORY FOR THE NEXT FIVE DAY HAS BEEN ISSUED BECAUSE THE TEMPERATURE COMBINED WITH THE HEAT INDEX CONTINUING

THROUGH SATURDAY, JUNE 27. THE TEMPERATURE IS EXPECTED TO BE IN THE BE IN THE UPPER NINETIES AND THE AIR QUALITY IS CODE ORANGE WHICH IS UNHEALTHY.



LOCATION OF PUBLIC COOLING CENTERS

Call (202) 727-6161

SENIORS NEEDING FANS AND ENERGY COST ASSISTANCE

Call (202) 673-6750

HYPERTHERMIA HOTLINE

FOR HOMELESS AND PERSONS AT RISK

(202) 399-7093

WHEN AIR QUALITY AND HEAT INDEX REACHES UNHEALTHFUL LEVELS:

- ✓ **CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY SHOULD REDUCE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.**

- ✓ **HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS SHOULD LIMIT STRENUOUS OUTDOOR WORK AND EXERCISE.**

- ✓ **INDIVIDUALS WITH HEART OR RESPIRATORY AILMENTS, EMPHYSEMA, ASTHMA, OR CHRONIC BRONCHITIS SHOULD LIMIT THEIR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES. IF BREATHING BECOMES DIFFICULT, MOVE INDOORS.**

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS FOR NETWORK AGENCIES:

- ✓ **MAKE CONTACT WITH HOMEBOUND OR AT RISK SENIOR CLIENTS TO LET THEM KNOW OF THE HEAT ALERT AND AIR QUALITY ALERT.**
- ✓ **IF A SENIOR CLIENT HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOU TODAY, TRY TO RESCHEDULE, IF POSSIBLE.**
- ✓ **ASK SENIORS TO STAY AT HOME OR REDUCE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY.**
- ✓ **ASK NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TO CHECK ON FRAIL OR ISOLATED ELDERLY.**
- ✓ **WHEN CHECKING ON THE HOMEBOUND AND YOU DISCOVER THAT THE TEMPERATURE IS TOO HOT, ASSIST THE SENIOR IN TRYING TO KEEP COOL.**
- ✓ **ADVISE THEM TO STAY INDOORS AND NOT TO GO OUT BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 10 A.M. AND 3 P.M.**

- ✓ **ALLOW SENIORS IN THE COMMUNITY TO COME TO YOUR SENIOR NUTRITION/WELLES CENTER TO COOL OFF DURING YOUR HOURS OF OPERATION.**

- ✓ **TELL THEM TO STAY COOL BY TAKING FREQUENT BATHS AND SHOWERS, DRINKING WATER, WEARING LIGHT CLOTHING, TURNING ON AIR CONDITIONER OR FAN, AND GO WHERE THEY CAN COOL OFF.**

- ✓ **MAKE SURE THAT YOUR FACILITY IS COOL.**

- ✓ **LET THE OFFICE ON AGING KNOW IF YOU ARE BEING OVERWHELMED BY CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE.**

Prepared by:

District of Columbia
Office on Aging