Hot weather: How to stay cool and safe

When outside temperatures are very high, the danger for heat-related illnesses rises. People’s bodies are not able to cool themselves quickly enough, and they overheat. In severe instances, people can suffer heat stroke, which can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Older adults, young children, and people with mental illness and chronic diseases are at highest risk for heat-related illness. But even young and healthy individuals can suffer in heat if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather.

You can protect yourself and loved ones against very hot temperatures by following these recommendations:

Stay cool

- Spend more time in air conditioned places. If you don’t have air conditioning, consider visiting a mall, movie theater or other cool public places.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun.
- Dress in lightweight clothing.
- Check up on your elderly neighbors and relatives to take these precautions too.

Drink liquids:

- Drink plenty of water. Avoid drinks with caffeine, alcohol and large amounts of sugar because they can actually dehydrate your body.
- Have a beverage with you at all times, and sip or drink frequently. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink.

If you go outside:

- Limit the time you’re in direct sunlight.
- Do not leave infants, children, people with mobility challenges and pets in a parked car, even with the window rolled down.
- Avoid or reduce doing activities that are tiring, or take a lot of energy.
- Do outdoor activities in the cooler morning and evening hours.
- Avoid sunburn. Use a sunscreen lotion with a high SPF (sun protection factor) rating.
**Certain medications** may increase sensitivity to the heat. If you are concerned about the heat and the medications you are taking, check with your doctor. Do not take salt tablets unless your doctor tells you to.

**Recognizing heat exhaustion and heat stroke**

When people's bodies can't cool themselves quickly enough it can cause heat exhaustion.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea and vomiting. If you see someone with signs of overheating, move the person to a cooler location, have them rest for a few minutes and then slowly drink a cool beverage. Get medical attention for them immediately if they do not feel better.

Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke, which can cause death or permanent disability unless treated immediately.

Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, and dry skin
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Nausea, confusion and unconsciousness