PROTECTING ELDERS FROM HEAT STROKE

Elders are at elevated risk of harm from heat. Learn the signs to keep your family members safe.

INCREASED RISK

Older adults are more susceptible to heat extremes. Their bodies are less efficient in cooling, they are more likely to suffer from chronic medical conditions, take medications that interfere with cooling, and are more likely to be isolated, making responding to heat more difficult.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Warning signs:
- Thirst/dehydration
- Irritable or grouchy
- Dizziness
- Lack coordination
- Unusual fatigue/tiredness
- Nausea and vomiting

HEAT EXHAUSTION CAN PROGRESS TO SERIOUS HEATSTROKE QUICKLY IN ELDERS. THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.

HEAT STROKE

- Fainting or becoming unconscious
- A change in behavior—confusion, agitation, staggering, or acting strangely
- Body temperature over 104°F (40°C)

- Dry, flushed skin
- A strong, rapid pulse or a slow, weak pulse
- Not sweating, even if it is hot

PREVENTION is the best approach

- Use air conditioning in cars and the home
- If home has no AC or is overheated, go to cooling centers, libraries, malls, or other places with air conditioning
- Keep hydrated, encourage lots of fluids (don’t wait until thirsty to drink!)
- Stay in shady areas if outside
- Avoid direct sun exposure
- Dress in light, cotton clothing
- Take cool showers or baths to cool down

REFERENCES