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Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

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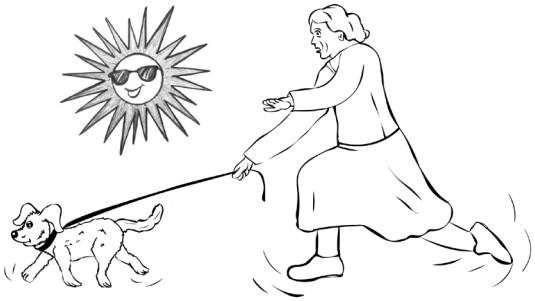
Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

Heat Waves / Dehydration



Dehydration and heat stroke are common heat-related diseases that can be life-threatening if left untreated. If the temperature or humidity is going up or an air pollution alert is in effect, you are at increased risk for a heat-related illness. Play it safe by checking the weather report before going outside.

Heat-related illness occurs when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating isn't enough and a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs. When both the temperature and humidity are high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. Old age, youth (age 0–4), obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn and prescription drug and alcohol use are other risk factors for heat-related illness.

Heat Stroke and Heat Exhaustion

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. When the body is unable to control its temperature, it rises rapidly and sweating mechanisms fail. Body temperature may rise to 106°F or higher within 10–15 minutes. ***Heat stroke* can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided**. *Heat exhaustion* is less severe, more common, and occurs when the body becomes severely dehydrated. If left untreated, it leads to heat stroke.

Signs of Heat Stroke

- ☞ Extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- ☞ Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating)
- ☞ Rapid, strong pulse
- ☞ Throbbing headache; dizziness
- ☞ Nausea; confusion
- ☞ Unconsciousness

These are signs of a life-threatening emergency. **Have someone call 911** while you begin cooling the person:

- ☞ Get him to a shady area.
- ☞ Cool him rapidly, however you can: Immerse him in a cool tub of water or shower; spray him with cool water from a garden hose; sponge him with cool water; or, if the humidity is low, wrap him in a cool, wet sheet and fan him vigorously.
- ☞ Monitor body temperature; continue cooling efforts until body temperature drops to 101–102°F.
- ☞ If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the ER for further instructions.
- ☞ If he is conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or other nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

Article continues on page 2

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Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much fluid. This can happen either when a person doesn't drink enough, or when she loses large amounts of fluid through diarrhea, vomiting, sweating, or *exercise*. A *severely dehydrated* body no longer has enough fluid to get blood to vital organs. This can cause *shock*, a life-threatening condition. Because elderly people don't feel thirst as much, make a special effort to provide the person in your care with enough fluids. A person's fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health, and weather. Dehydration, especially in the elderly, can increase confusion and muscle weakness and cause nausea. Nausea, in turn, will prevent her from eating or drinking, causing more dehydration.

Older adults can become dehydrated because they may:

- Have kidneys that do not work well.
- Choose not to drink because of *incontinence*.
- Have physical problems that make it hard to drink or hold a glass, find it painful or exhausting to walk to the bathroom, or difficult to communicate.
- Take *medicines* that increase urine output.

Stay Hydrated, Stay Safe

Drink: Drinking plenty of water is key to staying healthy in the heat. During hot weather, drink more liquid than your thirst indicates. Increase fluid intake, regardless of activity level. Avoid drinks containing alcohol, caffeine and sugar because they actually cause you to lose more fluid. *If a doctor limits fluid intake, make sure to ask how much to drink when it is hot.*

Keep drinks cool, not cold, which causes stomach cramps.

Wear loose clothing which helps air to circulate around your skin, allowing sweat to evaporate and cool your body.

Stay out of the sun.

Wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen: Sunburned skin hampers your body's ability to cool off.

Know the symptoms: Symptoms of *heat exhaustion* include fatigue, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle cramps and irritability. If you notice any of these symptoms, take a break and drink water.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; WebMD; MayoClinic.com; MedicineNet

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Taking Care of Yourself— Stop COVID-19 Virus

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you should especially clean hands after you have been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people, such as door handles, tables, gas pumps, shopping carts, or electronic cashier registers/screens, etc. Also wash hands before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because that's how germs enter our bodies.

Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:

- Touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands
- Touch a contaminated surface or objects
- Blow your nose, cough, or sneeze into hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects

Source: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus

Inspiration

Be optimistic. It feels better.
—Dalai Lama

Live Life Laughing!

It kills me to see them grow up.

But it would kill you quicker if they didn't!

Memory Care - Glass of Water

All older adults are at risk for dehydration, but this risk increases for people with Alzheimer's. Besides forgetting to drink, people with Alzheimer's may not be able to communicate their needs or have difficulty swallowing. If they are incontinent, they may avoid fluids. A major cause of emergency room visits for frail or demented older adults is dehydration.

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Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS– Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs and COVID-19 . Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community. Follow these five steps every time:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Source: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus

NEXT ISSUE… RANGE OF MOTION - EXERCISE

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

QUICK QUIZ

Cities tend to be hotter than their natural surroundings because if you have less green cover, you will have higher temperatures, and greater exposure to heat. Trees provide shade, but they also cool the environment down through the evaporation of water from their leaves — a process similar to how humans sweat to cool down. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness.

T F

2. Avoid drinks containing alcohol, caffeine and sugar because they actually cause you to lose more fluid.

T F

3. People with Alzheimer's forget to drink and may not be able to communicate their needs.

T F

4. When the body is unable to control its temperature, it rises rapidly and sweating mechanisms fail.

T F

5. It is extremely important to recognize early symptoms of heat exhaustion.

T F

6. Heat stroke is *not* a life-threatening emergency.

T F

7. If the heat stroke victim is conscious and able to swallow, give him cool water or other nonalcoholic drinks or decaffeinated beverages.

T F

8. A *severely dehydrated* body no longer has enough fluid to get blood to vital organs. This can cause *shock*, a life-threatening condition.

T F

9. Old age, obesity, dehydration, heart disease, sunburn and prescription drug and alcohol use are some other risk factors for heat-related illness.

T F

10. Touching your eyes, nose, or mouth is *not* how germs enter our bodies.

T F

Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

KEY: 1. T; 2. T; 3. T; 4. T; 5. T; 6. F; 7. T; 8. T; 9. T; 10. F

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