

# Simple precautions for a healthier summer

Now that summer is here, the longer periods of sunlight, higher humidity and higher temperatures can quickly take a toll on the health of older adults. Seniors are especially vulnerable to heat-related illnesses because older bodies often respond poorly to temperature changes. They often don't start sweating until their temperature has already soared. In addition, many medications prescribed to seniors can affect the body's ability to cool down; these include anti-depressants, motion sickness drugs and blood pressure medications.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND TREAT HEALTH PROBLEMS CAUSED BY HEAT

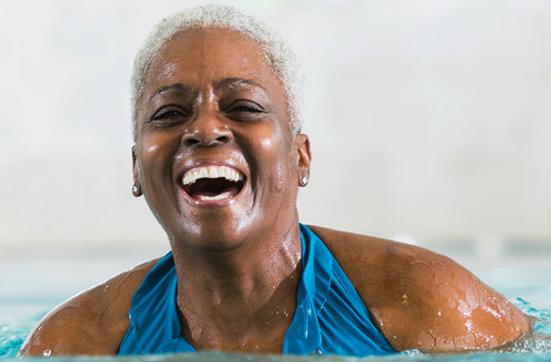
HEALTH ISSUE:	WHAT IT IS:	WARNING SIGNS:	WHAT TO DO:
<b>Dehydration</b>	A loss of water in the body that can be serious if not treated.	Weakness, headache, muscle cramps, dizziness, confusion, and passing out.	<b>Call a healthcare provider or 911.</b> Meanwhile, drink plenty of water and, if possible, "sports drinks" such as Gatorade™, which contain important salts called "electrolytes." Among other things, electrolytes play a key role in regulating one's heartbeat. The body loses electrolytes when it's dehydrated. <i>Note: Nothing is better for hydration than plain water and the Mayo Clinic suggests that drinking eight 8-ounce glasses of fluid per day is a reasonable goal.</i>
<b>Heat stroke</b>	A very dangerous rise in body temperature that can be fatal.	A body temperature of 103 degrees or higher; red, hot, and dry skin; a fast pulse; headache; dizziness; nausea or vomiting; confusion; and passing out.	<b>Call 911 immediately.</b> Move to a cool, shady place. Take off or loosen heavy clothes. If possible, douse yourself with cool water or put cloths soaked with cool water on your wrists, ankles, armpits, and neck to lower your temperature. Try and see if you can safely swallow water or sports drinks BUT only provide fluids to those who are awake and able to swallow.
<b>Heat exhaustion</b>	A serious health problem caused by too much heat and dehydration. If not treated, it may lead to heat stroke (see above).	Heavy sweating or no sweating, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, paleness, cold or clammy skin, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, fast and weak pulse, fainting.	<b>Without delay, move to a cool, shady place and drink plenty of cool fluids, such as water or Gatorade.</b> Call 911 without delay if you have high blood pressure or heart problems, or if you don't feel better quickly after moving to the shade and drinking liquids.

Diana Simpson, Director of Social Services | DSimpson@mcpherson-hr.com | (580) 761-5175

1601 N. Main St., McPherson, KS | 620-241-5360 | McPhersonHealthandRehab.com

## WARM WEATHER HOT LIST

When it's hot, hot, hot, here are some precautionary measures you can take to stay healthy and cool.



### Stay hydrated!

Seniors might not notice their dehydration or thirst until they are in dire need of water. For optimal hydration, the Mayo Clinic suggests that drinking eight 8-ounce glasses of fluid per day is a reasonable goal. Stay away from beverages that dehydrate like coffee and alcohol.



### Don't overexert yourself

Being active in the heat accelerates the onset of heat stroke.



### Dress for the season

Loose-fitting, light colored clothes are best when it's hot, and wearing a wide-brimmed hat is perfect when out in the sun.



### Don't forget the sunglasses!

For seniors, eye protection is important. If you're going outside, you should always wear sunglasses that offer 100 percent UV protection. For extra protection, consider wearing a hat and limiting your time outdoors when the sun's rays are most intense--between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM.



### Reduce bath and shower water temperature.

A moderate temperature for showers and baths (not too hot or too cold) is recommended in hot weather. Placing cool, damp washcloths on your neck, ankles and wrists can also help with cooling.



### Check the weather

Plan ahead—if a heat wave is coming, make appropriate plans.



### Wear sunscreen

Sun damage does more than cause premature aging—it can also lead to skin cancer and this is even more true for seniors. Older skin is more susceptible to the burning effects of the sun due to a lessened immune response, natural thinning, and a reduced healing factor.

- Apply at least SPF 15 every 80 minutes or SPF 30 if it's more than 80 minutes.
- Use water-resistant sunscreen if you'll be sweating or taking a swim during your time outdoors and be sure to reapply as directed.

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