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Keeping Your Cool!

With the heat we are now facing, I thought it would be a good idea to refresh our knowledge with respect to heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration. It is so important to keep a close eye on our loved ones, young or old, to ensure that they are comfortable and hydrated.

These conditions are especially worrisome in the elderly. In terms of heat exposure, their body temperature gauges become less reliable with age. They can heat up very quickly not realizing that they have entered “dangerous territory”. Likewise with dehydration, the elderly’s sense of thirst decreases with age and they may not realize that they have become parched enough to become seriously dehydrated.

At David York Agency, we always remind our home health aides to keep clients cool and well hydrated with water or other beverages as well as to pay a close eye for any signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration.

I hope you find this quick summary handy and timely. Please feel free to forward this to anyone you feel would be interested and keep sending your feedback and suggestions. Again, you may unsubscribe at any time. We only ask that you do not press the spam button, but rather safely unsubscribe by clicking on the link above.

Best wishes,

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Breeze Through It: Avoid Heat Exhaustion

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, extreme heat causes an average of 658 deaths per year in the United States. That's more than many natural disasters in this country! No one is more at risk from heat exhaustion and heat stroke than the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions.

Taking certain medications like beta blockers and diuretics, having medical issues like heart disease and just living alone all increase your risk for heat stress and are common traits among senior citizens. Heat stress can result in minor inconveniences like heat rash or cramping or it can create serious problems like dehydration, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. [Preventing heat-related illness is an important part of senior health.](#)

Symptoms

Good advice for any age is to pay attention to your body when it's warm and be aware of the symptoms of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Here are a few symptoms to watch out for when the weather gets warm. Avoid spending too much time outdoors all at once, but if it does happen, be aware of the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

The most common signs of heat exhaustion are:

- Dehydration ▪ Dizziness ▪ Fatigue
- Headaches ▪ Nausea ▪ Vomiting
- Clammy skin ▪ Cramping ▪ Dark urine
- Fainting ▪ Hot, dry skin ▪ Paleness, even when hot

Heat stroke is the more severe and symptoms include the above as well as:

- High body temperature
- Alternating between chills and sweating
- Flushed skin
- Rapid breathing
- Racing heart rate
- Confusion or disorientation
- Severe headache

Treatments

If you notice these symptoms, get indoors or in the shade immediately, drink water and remove any unnecessary clothing. For both heat exhaustion and heat stroke in the elderly, seek medical help immediately. Call 911 and cool the person down by getting them to shade or air conditioning as quickly as possible. Use any means necessary to cool the body's temperature like wet towels, a hose or ice packs placed in the armpits and groin area or even a cool bath.

Prevention

Prevention is far better than treatment. If the temperature is over 80 degrees Fahrenheit, seniors need to take precautions.

1. Limit your time outside in the hottest parts of the day: from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Even if you stay in the shade, the heat and humidity can do just as much damage without the sun being directly on you.
2. Drink plenty of water. Fluids will keep your body hydrated and less likely to suffer the ill effects of

heat exhaustion. Avoid any drinks with alcohol in them; they will only dehydrate your body and make the situation worse.

3. If you must go out, ensure that you are wearing proper attire. Hats with a wide brim, loose fitted clothing, and sunscreen all help to protect you from the heat.
4. Light colors help to reflect the sun's rays and the heat associated with it. Whites and pastels will keep you much cooler than dark blues and blacks. Also be sure that your clothing is lightweight and loose fitting.
5. Make sure your AC is functioning.
6. Avoid exercise and other strenuous activity in the extreme heat. Workout in air conditioned gymnasiums or through activities that are cooling, such as swimming.
7. Avoid hot areas such as attics or cars that have been outside for a long time. Cool your car down before getting in.
8. Discuss all your medications with your doctor to learn which can increase your risk of heat-related illnesses.
9. Last, but not least, younger people should check on older loved ones often.

One of the most dangerous issues with overexertion in the summer is actually a psychological one. Many people, especially the elderly, do not want to admit when they can't do something safely. Some would rather risk severe injury or death rather than appear weak or incapable. However, be aware of your own limitations and the seriousness of the summer weather. Don't allow your idea of what you could do in the past keep you from taking care of your health now.

Dehydration: Signs, Symptoms & Treatments

Dehydration is one of the more common results of heat exhaustion and the one people are most familiar with and guard against. Simply put, it occurs when the body loses more fluids than it takes in. This throws the body into a state of imbalance which, if left untreated, could lead to death.

Causes of dehydration include the following conditions where there is an obvious loss of fluid:

- Fever
- Heat exposure
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Interestingly, other less obvious causes of dehydration include:

- Diabetes which can cause dehydration if glucose levels are elevated for too long a period. The kidneys seek to remove the extra glucose through the urine, thereby increasing the risk of dehydration.
- Irritable bowel syndrome which is often accompanied by diarrhea, a common cause of dehydration.
- Some prescription medications and dietary supplements can dehydrate the body so it is important to discuss this side effect with your doctor.
- Decreased sense of thirst with age which accompanies alterations in other physiological control systems in the elderly.

Signs of dehydration are:

- Dry mouth
- Dark urine
- Lethargy
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Lack of tears or sweat

More severe cases of dehydration may experience:

- Dry skin and shriveling
- Low blood pressure
- Fever
- Increased heart rate
- Unconsciousness

Treatments

The treatment for dehydration is similar to that of heat exposure in that it is important to keep the person cool and re-hydrated. Offer water or drinks infused with electrolytes in order to replace any that were lost. In the elderly, medical treatment is always a safe bet. Call the doctor immediately or go to the emergency room where they restore bodily fluids intravenously, check vital signs and probe for the underlying causes of the dehydration.

Prevention

After understanding some of the causes, there are many things that you can do to prevent dehydration. Some helpful tips include:

1. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Always keep a bottle of water on hand or next to you on a side table or night table. Bring extra when you go outdoors. Assist the elderly and remind them to drink frequently.
2. Avoid caffeine and alcohol consumption since those drinks tend to be dehydrating.
3. Stay in cool areas and limit your exposure to the sun especially in high heat index days and day parts.
4. Make sure your diet includes plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Aside from providing vital nutrients, they are foods with a high water content.

As always, David York Agency is available to assist in any way you need to ensure that your loved one gets the very best of care. We provide skilled home health aide services for the elderly in their home and are abreast of all the latest guidelines for seniors.

[David York Home Healthcare Agency](#)

When home healthcare becomes necessary for your aging loved one, David York Home Healthcare Agency can provide skilled home health aide services. Our home health aides are caring and compassionate as well as sensitive to the physical and emotional needs of their patient. David York Agency can satisfy all your questions and would be happy to give you more information and discuss your case with you. Please call us at 718.376.7755 or visit our website at [David York Agency](#) - providing healthcare professionals to the elderly and infirm, with the highest degree of personal service. Please like us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Google+](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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