



## Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness

Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others, especially older adults and people with chronic illnesses such as heart disease or high blood pressure. As we age our internal organs function with less efficiency, especially those that help the body deal with heat. Also, if you take combinations of medications your body can have a lower ability to deal with heat. Here are some general guidelines to help you stay well when the weather is hot.

- **DRINK MORE FLUIDS** – Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink! Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him or her how much you should drink while the weather is hot. Carry a water bottle with you if you have to go out.
- **AVOID ALCOHOL OR LARGE AMOUNTS OF SUGAR** – Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar—these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- **STAY INDOORS** – Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning and you have transportation, go to a public place, such as a store, or the library—even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. Circulation of air helps you keep cool, so turn on a fan or your air conditioner. **If you don't have air conditioning and need a fan, contact Fayette Senior Services at 770-461-0813 and ask to speak to a Case Manager.**

**IMPORTANT!** Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.

- **DRESS "COOL"** – It's better to stay indoors with air conditioning, but if you must go out, wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing, sunscreen, and a broad-brimmed hat.
- **AVOID UNNECESSARY ACTIVITY** - especially in a hot environment!

*SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR MORE TIPS*



- **KNOW YOUR MEDICATION** – The hot weather may affect your reaction to certain medications. Contact your doctor to find out if the hot weather and your medications mix. ALWAYS consult with your doctor before you stop taking or change your medications!
- **HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND CHECK UP ON YOU** – Plan to have someone check on you at different times of the day when the temperature is extremely high. **If you don't know anyone who can check on you, contact Fayette Senior Services at 770-461-0813 and ask to speak to a Case Manager.**
- **PLAN AHEAD** – If you must go outdoors, try to plan your outside activities during the coolest part of the day, early in the morning or later in the evening. Try to rest in shady areas.
- **CUT DOWN ON EXERCISE OR ACTIVITIES** – If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, non-alcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. WARNING: If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.

Source: Centers for Disease and Prevention cdc.gov

### **WARNING SIGNS OF HEAT RELATED ILLNESS**

#### **SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF YOU DEVELOP SYMPTOMS**

**Heat Cramps:** Painful muscle contractions, usually in the hamstring muscles. Not everybody experiences these symptoms prior to heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

**Heat Exhaustion:** Dizziness, fatigue, faintness and/or headache.

- Skin that is pale and clammy - Pulse is rapid and weak.
- Breathing is fast and shallow - Muscle cramps.
- Intense thirst.

**Heatstroke:** Often preceded by heat exhaustion and its symptoms.

- Skin that is hot, dry and flushed - no sweating - High body temperatures.
- Rapid heartbeat - Confusion