

Hot Weather Preparedness Tips for Seniors

The Department for the Aging urges all older New Yorkers to take precautions as the temperature rises and humidity increases. Seniors with medical conditions and those who take medications should be more careful in these conditions.

Hot, humid weather affects the body in a number of ways. Two of the more serious ailments, apart from sunburn, are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include nausea, dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps, pale and clammy skin, disorientation, or headache. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should call a doctor or 911 immediately. Heat exhaustion can lead to the more serious heat related illness heat stroke.

To avoid heat exhaustion and other heat-related disorders:

- Avoid exertion and strenuous activity on hot and humid days.
- Drink plenty of water or diluted fruit juices—avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages.
- Keep all rooms well ventilated with the use of a fan, air conditioner, or open windows. Draw blinds and use awnings when possible to block the sun's direct rays.
- Avoid the midday heat. Complete errands during the cooler morning or evening hours.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and a hat outdoors. Do not forget to apply an SPF 15 or higher sunscreen.
- Rest in air-conditioned areas. Consider going to public pools or air-conditioned libraries, stores, and malls.
- Cool down with a bath or shower.

When the heat index (a combination of temperature and humidity) is expected to be dangerously high, the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) declares a heat emergency and activates pre-designated cooling centers throughout the city. Cooling centers are facilities that are air conditioned and open to the public. During a declared heat emergency call 311 or access OEM's website at www.nyc.gov/oem to find out where the closest cooling center is located. Many senior centers are considered cooling centers—check with 311 first before heading to the nearest center.

In addition, during heat emergencies the Department for the Aging (DFTA) urges New Yorkers to check up on their older neighbors who may be isolated from friends and family. Isolated and disabled seniors are at greater risk of heat-related illnesses. Finally, those seniors who are able should contact relatives, friends, or neighbors—in person or by phone—at least twice a day.

For all heat-related inquiries please call 311. For information regarding services and programs for older New Yorkers call 311 and ask for the Department for the Aging.