

# Hot days can seriously affect seniors' health

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"Is it hot enough for you?"

That comment might deserve an eye roll, but you might consider tweaking it to, "Is it too hot for you today?" With daytime temperatures in the 90s during mid- to late summer and the heat index even higher on

many days, hot days can indeed be too hot.

Heat can make everyone uncomfortable, but for older adults, that discomfort can also mean danger. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [older adults](#) are more prone to heat stress for at least three reasons. One, as we age, we don't adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in [temperature](#). Seniors also are more likely to take prescription medicines that affect the body's ability to control sweat or the body's temperature. And seniors are more likely to have a [chronic medical condition](#) that affects body response to heat.

## HOW TO STAY COOL WHEN IT'S HOT OUT THERE

- First of all, make sure you have access to air conditioning. Don't rely on a fan to do the job. "If your home doesn't have [air conditioning](#), contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area," the CDC advises.

- Drink more water than you usually do; don't worry about the bathroom consequences. And don't wait until you're thirsty; just make sure you stay hydrated. If your doctor doesn't want you drinking past a certain limit on water or you're taking water pills, check with your doctor on how much water you should drink during hot weather.

- Avoid using the oven or stove-top if you can. Instead, opt for refrigerated salads or other cold foods, or foods you can microwave. Similarly, avoid using your dryer in the heat of the day.

- Limit activity on hot days. If you must get outdoor exercise, go for a short walk early in the morning.

- Wear light-colored or loose-fitting clothing to help keep cool.

- Cool baths or showers can help.

## KNOW THE SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS

Would you recognize the signs of [heat stroke](#) and heat exhaustion? You might think they're the same thing, but heatstroke is more serious; it's a medical emergency that requires immediate help.

Heat exhaustion: Nausea or vomiting; heavy sweating; dizziness; weakness or tiredness; headache; fainting; cold, pale, clammy skin; muscle cramps and a fast or weak pulse.

What to do: If you have symptoms of [heat exhaustion](#), move to a cool place, loosen your clothes, sip [water](#) and put cool, wet cloths on your body or take a cool bath. Seek medical help if you're throwing up, your symptoms get worse or they last more than an hour, the CDC advises.

Heat stroke: Body temperature of 103 degrees or higher; confusion; nausea; fainting; fast, strong pulse; hot, red, dry or damp skin; headache and dizziness

What to do: If you have symptoms of heat stroke, call 911 immediately. Move to a cool place and use cool cloths to help bring body temperature down. Do not drink anything; do not give a person with [heat](#) stroke symptoms anything to drink.

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