



Alzheimer's Arkansas

Caring for Caregivers

TAKE PRECAUTIONS IN THE SUMMER HEAT

We are in the midst of another hot summer. High temperatures and humidity can combine to create deadly conditions, especially for high-risk populations such as the very young, and the very old and the people weakened by chronic illness or other health conditions. It is important to check on elderly family members and neighbors regularly to be sure they are not suffering from the effects of high temperatures.

The elderly and the chronically ill are especially vulnerable to the effects of high temperatures. They perspire less and are more likely to have health problems requiring medications that can impair the body's response to heat. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to find out if your medications fall into this category. Some of these medications include anti-psychotics, major tranquilizers, antihistamines, over-the-counter sleeping pills, antidepressants, heart drugs and some anti-parkinson agents.

Older Adults, particularly those with dementia, are less sensitive to thirst signals and may drink less than they need. Remind them to maintain a steady intake of fluids when taking part in outdoor activities, even if they do not feel thirsty. If they are on medications that alter the body's processing of fluids, be sure they check with their physicians to determine the proper amount of fluid intake.

Heat-related illness occurs when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. Dehydration can lead to heat exhaustion and heatstroke. It may also lead to increased confusion due to an imbalance in electrolytes.

Hydration Tips:

- Offer liquids even if the person says he is not thirsty
- Try flavored waters
- Make some decaffeinated iced tea
- Enjoy a Popsicle
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol
- Try using a straw
- Some fruit has lots of water, offer watermelon

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