



A World Where Aging is Honored

TIPS for Older Adults to Cope with Extreme Heat from Your Central Vermont Council on Aging

1. Why are extreme heat situations of greater concern to older adults?

- a. Older individuals are not able to adjust to changes in temperature as easily as younger people.
- b. Older people are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes the body's response to heat.
- c. Older adults are more likely to take medications which affect the body's ability to sweat or control temperature.

2. What can seniors do to protect themselves during heat emergencies?

- a. Remain hydrated – drink water frequently throughout the day. Other beverages can help as well, but alcohol or caffeinated beverages can dehydrate the body further. It is best to drink small amounts frequently and not wait until you are thirsty.
- b. Try to stay in the coolest part of your home. Keep shades drawn to keep out sun. If there is an air conditioner, try to stay in that room as much as possible. Fans can help, but at temperatures over 85 degrees they can actually make you hotter by evaporating perspiration too quickly.
- c. Avoid using the stove or oven. Stick to cold food, such as sandwiches, salads and fruit.
- d. Wear light colored and loose fitting clothing.
- e. Take cool baths and showers.
- f. Check on your friends, and have them check on you.
- g. Know the symptoms of heat related illness and seek help if they occur. These include muscle cramps, weakness, nausea, dizziness, and/or profuse sweating.

3. What resources are available to seniors during heat emergencies?

- a. Many towns have designated cooling centers. Check to see if your town has a place, before you need it.

- b. Spend time in public areas with air conditioning, such as libraries, malls, senior centers or churches.
 - c. For information about resources, you can call the CVCOA Senior Helpline (1-800-642-5119) during normal business hours, or 211 at other times, to find possible resources.
- 4. Are there other considerations for seniors and disabled individuals?**
- a. Check with your doctor before there is an extreme heat event. You may have medications which would require that you limit your fluid intake, or could affect the way your body responds to heat.
 - b. If you do not drive, find out about your transportation options before you need them, so you could get to a cooler location.
 - c. Be prepared in case you do need to leave to go to a cooler location. Have medications, water bottle, snacks, and any other essentials available.
- 5. How can friends or caregivers help?**
- a. Check on older adults frequently. Be aware that certain medical conditions such as dementia, heart disease, and impaired circulation, as well as certain medications, can affect a person's ability to respond to extreme heat. You may need to check with their doctor to see if there are special concerns for this person.
 - b. Know what resources are available, and offer to help individuals access them if necessary.

Call the CVCOA Senior Helpline (1-800-642-5119) during normal business hours, or 211 at other times, to find possible resources. If you have an emergency, call 911.

