



Hot Days, Warm Nights and Missoula's Seniors

Summer in Missoula can be a wonderful time of year. But with a changing climate, summers increasingly bring hotter days and warmer nights. There's a lot we can do to understand the risks, adjust our activities, and keep cool.

CHECK the Weather Forecast

There are many websites or local news options. Try www.weather.gov.

RECOGNIZE heat-related illness

Heat exhaustion

- o Feeling faint or dizzy
- o Excessive sweating
- o Cool, clammy skin
- o Nausea or vomiting
- o Rapid, weak pulse
- o Muscle cramps

Heat stroke

- o Throbbing headach
- o No sweating
- o Red, hot, dry skin
- o Nausea or vomiting
- o Rapid, strong pulse
- o May lose consciousness

What's the problem for Seniors?

Exposure to high heat can be dangerous, especially the longer you're in it and the more active you are. As we age, our bodies have a more difficult time adjusting to extremes. Engaging in physical activity - even walking or gardening - when it's in the 90s or triple digits puts us at risk from heat stress - both heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Extreme temperatures can also make us moody, irritable, and stressed.

Who is at risk?

Everyone is at risk when it is hot, but especially Seniors and those with chronic pre-existing conditions (respiratory, cardiovascular, and diabetes). Extreme heat can kill, directly via heat stroke or indirectly via increased risk of heart attack and stroke. Of particular concern are homebound folks whose residences are not easily cooled.

What do we do about heat illness?

Heat Exhaustion:

- ✓ Get to a cooler, air conditioned or shaded place, drink water, take a cool shower or use a wet compress, and rest!

Heat Stroke:

- ☎ Call 911, then take immediate action to cool the person until help arrives (ice bath, cold compresses, get under shade, etc.)



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What can Seniors do?

- **Head inside.** If your home or apartment is cool, either because of air conditioning or fans, stay inside during the hottest parts of the day. If it's too hot at home, can you get to a place with A/C or other cooling features? Visit our Summer Smart webpage for our *Cool Places* interactive map to get ideas.
- **Stay cool outside.** When outdoors, stay in the shade. Wear light weight, light-colored clothing. Take a cool shower or bath before heading out or carry your own "mister". If you exercise, do so in the early morning.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink more water than usual - don't wait until you're thirsty. Carry a water bottle! Avoid alcohol or sugary drinks.
- **Stay informed.** Check local news for extreme heat alerts and safety tips. Plan outdoor time accordingly. Know the symptoms of heat illness.
- **Stay connected.** If you're having trouble, call your health provider, social services, or us at Climate Smart! Check on neighbors - people and pets - to see how they are weathering the heat.



What about at Home?

- **Windows:** Keep them open at night, closed with blinds drawn during the day.
- **Fans are your friend:** They use less energy than A/C. At night place one in a window facing in to bring in cool air, and one facing out to push out warm air.
- **Lights, stove, oven:** If your light bulbs are hot, replace them with cool, energy-efficient LEDs. Avoid slow-cook dishes and the oven. Use appliances sparingly.
- **Shade outside:** Use umbrellas, cloth, trees and shrubs. Blinds on the outside are more effective than inside. We may be able to help add shade cloth this summer or even plant shade trees for future years. Remember our trees need water during July and August!



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