

Summer Safety



For many people, summer is a time for warm, sunny days, outdoor activities like swimming, vacations and picnics with family and friends. However, summer can also bring extreme heat, increased risk of dehydration, foodborne illness and other health risks. Recognizing these risks and taking preventative steps will allow you to enjoy your summer without paying the price.

Heat-Related Illness

Every year thousands of people suffer from heat-related conditions (hyperthermia) like heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that every year around 300 people in the U.S. die from excessive heat exposure.** People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are not able to compensate for the heat and properly cool itself. Older adults are more susceptible as their bodies return to normal temperatures more slowly and their bodies' cooling mechanism is not as efficient. Being overweight, having poor circulation, chronic medical conditions and high blood pressure or taking certain medications can also increase your risk. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain and vital organs.

Protect yourself with these prevention tips:

- ▶ Air-conditioning is the primary protective factor against heat-related illness and death. If you don't have it, or to save money on your electric bill during the heat of the day, visit air-conditioned shopping malls and public libraries to help stay cool.



- ▶ During times of extreme heat temperatures stay indoors.
- ▶ Schedule outdoor activities carefully, limit sun exposure and rest in shaded areas. Remember the sun is hottest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- ▶ When outdoors wear appropriate clothing: lightweight, loose fitting and light colored. Don't forget sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats.

- ▶ Avoid dehydration and drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration is common among older adults and can be life threatening. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids, consuming fruits and vegetables, and avoiding caffeinated and/or alcoholic beverages that can act as a diuretic. Don't wait to drink until you are thirsty as that can be a sign of dehydration!



- ▶ Always wear sunscreen. A sunburn damages your skin, causes a loss of body fluids and affects your body's ability to cool itself. Sunscreen can also protect against skin cancer, which is strongly associated with ultraviolet radiation that comes from the sun. Look for sunscreen that offers "broad spectrum" protection and is SPF 30 or higher. Other skin cancer prevention tips include wearing protective clothing, avoiding midday sun exposure and seeing your doctor for a skin exam.

Summer Activities

As summer rolls around, outdoor and water activities are more common. These activities can range from swimming to gardening and can be both indoors and out. **Research has shown that older adults who remain active during their golden years have less depression, loneliness and more control over their lives.** To find activities in your area visit your local senior center, library or check your newspaper for local events.



▶ **Water activities** are abundant in the summer and may include swimming in community pools, pool parties with friends, water aerobics at a senior center, boating or perhaps even feeding the stingrays on a cruise! Remember to always be safe and follow water and sun safety precautions.

▶ **More than two-thirds of older adults are not involved in regular physical activity.** Take advantage of summer weather to enjoy walks, biking, golfing and gardening to help improve cardiac health or try an outdoor morning tai-chi class for better balance. These and other **exercise activities** can offer emotional benefits as well improve your overall health. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program and plan your outside activities during cooler morning and evening hours.

▶ Look for **community summer programs** like a special museum exhibit, outdoor symphony concert, farmers market or a summer reading club. Some places offer summer ticket discounts (senior discounts, too) for shows, movies or plays.



▶ **Volunteer** during the summer, or year round, at a summer reading program for kids, local animal shelter, church day camp, or become a Master Gardener or Park Ambassador. Organizations are always seeking volunteers and the opportunities are endless. **A recent study has found helping others improves your well-being and longevity.**



▶ With less busy college campuses in the summer, perhaps this may be a good time to go **back to school**. You can take courses that earn credit towards a degree or explore new areas for fun and enrichment. UNLV offers the *Adult Theatre Program*, *Road Scholar* and *Osher Lifelong Learning Institute* (contact 702-895-3394).



Whether **traveling** by car or plane to visit out-of-state family, RV-ing to a national park or touring another country - remember to use common sense, have a good time and follow a few safety tips.

- ▶ Wash your hands often to avoid becoming sick. Carry hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Safeguard your personal information, including credit cards, and save all your travel receipts to avoid theft or a stolen identity.
- ▶ Don't forget the home you left behind. Make sure it looks "lived in" while you are away to avoid burglary. Ask a trusted neighbor to help.

Summer Food Safety

Many of us during the summer season head outdoors to enjoy picnics at the park or backyard barbecues.

Along with the hamburgers and potato salad, don't forget food safety. **The Centers for Disease Control estimates 76 million people each year get sick by eating contaminated food.**

Foods contaminated by harmful bacteria and viruses can cause a foodborne illness (food poisoning) and older adults and children are considered most susceptible. Foodborne illness can occur within 24 hours of eating contaminated food, or even days or weeks later. Common symptoms of foodborne illness include: diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and fever. Food can become contaminated when we transport, store, prepare or serve it. It is important to use food safety techniques during every stage that we have contact with food.



- ▶ Always wash your hands before and after handling food. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds in warm, soapy water to effectively remove germs and dirt.
- ▶ Marinate food in the refrigerator and don't reuse the marinade on cooked food.
- ▶ Use a food thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature: hamburgers should be cooked to 160°F, steaks to 145°F, chicken breast 165°F and fish should be cooked to 145°F.
- ▶ Do not place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs and have plenty of clean utensils, plates and cookware on hand.
- ▶ Never let perishables (raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food, cut fresh fruits or vegetables) sit at room temperature for more than two hours before storing them in the refrigerator or freezer. When the temperature is above 90°F store within one hour.

be food safe.



clean. separate.
cook. chill.

www.befoodsafe.org

▶ Always use a clean cooler filled with ice or an ice pack to keep food cold. A full cooler will maintain cold temperatures longer. Placing drinks in a separate cooler can help you avoid having to open and close the food cooler many times.

▶ When traveling, transport the cooler in the air-conditioned part of your car rather than in a hot trunk. This includes your groceries from the store, too.

▶ A packed lunch with perishable items like meat, cheese or mayonnaise must be kept cold. A clean, insulated lunch bag with an ice pack is an easy way to do this.

Developed by:
Claudia C. Collins, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Aging Issues
Heidi Petermeier, Program Officer



Senior Wellness Series

Summer Safety for Older Adults

FACT SHEET 11-04

University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension



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For more information please contact Heidi Petermeier or Claudia Collins at (702) 222-3130.

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas offers the *Adult Theatre Program, Road Scholar* and *Osher Lifelong Learning Institute*. For more information please contact 702-895-3394.

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