



HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE ON AGING

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Extreme Heat Warnings! How to Stay Safe in This Heat By: Erin Ulibarri, MPH, CHES

The last few weeks have been unusually hot and humid here in Orange County. High humidity makes the temperature feel even hotter than it actually is. People 65 years of age or older are at particular risk for heat-related illnesses because they may not compensate for heat stress efficiently and are less likely to sense and respond to change in temperature. Heat stress can be prevented. Knowing the precautions to take to avoid these illnesses can keep you healthy and safe. Below are some tips to remember during this period of excessive heat:

Take it easy. If you do not have an air conditioned home, go somewhere cool. Visit a senior center, library, shopping mall, café, or movie theater. Go anywhere that is air conditioned, especially during the hot afternoon hours. Even a couple hours a day in the air conditioning will help keep you cool.

Drink water often. Drink a cup or more of water or sports drink every hour. You will become dehydrated before you feel thirsty. Do not wait to drink liquids until you feel thirsty. Avoid coffee, soda, or alcohol as these drinks make you lose water instead, rather than hydrate you.

Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Wear as little as possible; especially cotton, when you are at home. If you must go outdoors, wear a hat or use an umbrella to protect your head and neck from the sun and heat.

Watch what you eat. Avoid spicy foods and heavy meals because they warm up your body even more. Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables. Use your stove less and cook your meals during the cooler part of the day.

Limit your activity. Rest often and avoid exercise or activities that require a lot of exertion. If you go outside, such as for a walk, go early in the morning or in the evening when it is cooler.

Serious Signs of Heat-Related Illnesses

- Muscle cramps
- Weakness or dizziness
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Throbbing headache
- Heart beat is too weak, strong, or fast
- Clammy, sweaty skin
- Red, pale, or hot skin with no sweating
- Confusion
- Chest pains
- Trouble breathing

If you have any of these symptoms, cool down quickly by getting out of the heat or taking a shower or a dip in the pool. **Call 911** if you have trouble breathing, a rapid heartbeat, hot and dry skin with no sweating, or are feeling confused. To find the location of a Cooling Center location near you, call the State of California Consumer Affairs Office at **(800) 952-5210, ext 22**.

The Office on Aging can link you directly with the Consumer Affairs Office and send you a collapsible cup for drinking water and a *Stay Cool: Hot Weather Tips for Older Adults* brochure. Call their Information and Assistance Line at **(800) 510-2020 or (714) 567-7500** to request these items. The certified aging specialists will also be able to give you information on all programs for older adults in Orange County, including meals, transportation, in-home care, health and prescription insurance, caregiver needs, disabled services, legal assistance, adult day care, case management, exercise, social activities and much more!

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