



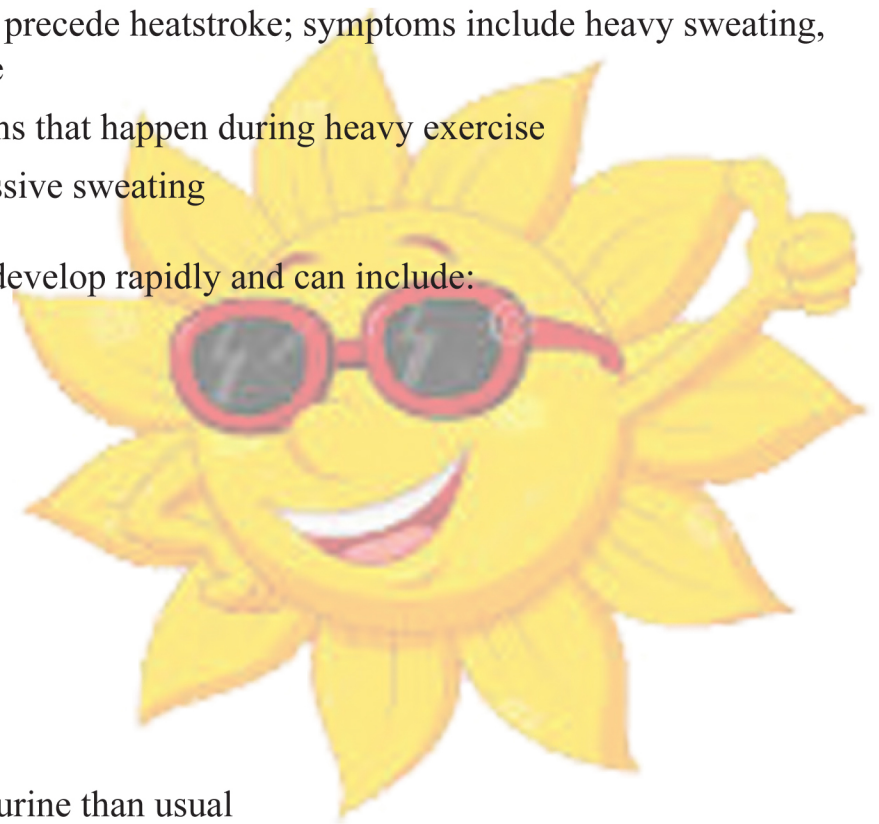
Coping with **HEAT**

Now that Spring is here and with Summer just around the corner, it's a good time to review heat related illnesses. Hot weather can be dangerous and seniors are particularly prone to its threat. Heat stress occurs when the body can't cool itself and maintain a healthy temperature. The body normally cools itself by sweating, but sometimes sweating isn't enough and the body temperature keeps rising. Heat stress is also known as hyperthermia. Elderly heat stroke and heat exhaustion are a real problem. These can include:

- ▶ **Heatstroke** - a life-threatening illness in which body temperature may rise above 106° F in minutes; symptoms include dry skin, rapid, strong pulse and dizziness
- ▶ **Heat exhaustion** - an illness that can precede heatstroke; symptoms include heavy sweating, rapid breathing and a fast, weak pulse
- ▶ **Heat cramps** - muscle pains or spasms that happen during heavy exercise
- ▶ **Heat rash** - skin irritation from excessive sweating

The symptoms of a heat related illness can develop rapidly and can include:

- ▶ very hot skin that feels 'flushed'
- ▶ heavy sweating
- ▶ dizziness
- ▶ extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- ▶ nausea (feeling sick)
- ▶ vomiting
- ▶ a rapid heartbeat (tachycardia)
- ▶ confusion
- ▶ urinating less often and much darker urine than usual



A person with heat exhaustion should be moved quickly to somewhere cool and given fluids, preferably water, to drink. However, certain groups of people are more at risk of getting heatstroke, or developing complications from dehydration, and should be taken to hospital. Heatstroke is a medical emergency. Dial 911 immediately to request an ambulance if you think that you or someone you know has heatstroke.



FOR YOUR HEALTH

it's hot out, wear light-colored, lightweight, loose-fitting clothes and a wide-brimmed hat.

Stay indoors during the hottest part of the day - During periods of extreme heat, the best time to go out and about is before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m., when the temperature tends to be cooler.

Take it easy - Avoid exercise and strenuous activity, particularly outdoors, when it's very hot out.

Keep an eye on the heat index - When there's a lot of moisture in the air (high humidity), the body's ability to cool itself through sweating is impaired. The heat index factors humidity and temperature to approximate how the weather really feels.

Seek an air conditioned environment - Seniors whose houses aren't conditioned should consider seeking an air conditioned space during extreme heat. The mall, library, or movie theater are all popular options. During heat waves many cities also set up "cooling centers", air conditioned public places, for seniors and other vulnerable populations.

Know the warning signs of heat-related illness - Dizziness, nausea, headache, rapid heartbeat, chest pain, fainting and breathing problems are all warning signs that help should be sought immediately.

Drink plenty of liquids - Dehydration is the root of many heat related health problems. Drink plenty of water or juice, even if you're not thirsty. But remember to avoid alcoholic or caffeinated drinks, as they can actually contribute to dehydration.

Wear appropriate clothes - When