



Staying Safe in the Summer Heat

Hot weather can be dangerous and too much heat is not safe for anyone. However, for [older adults](#), people with disabilities, and those with chronic health conditions, the thermometer doesn't have to hit 100 degrees to cause heat stress or even heat stroke.

Tips for Staying Cool

Caregivers can help prevent a heat-related emergency by keeping a loved one cool, watching for signs of heat stress, and following these tips for dealing with the summer heat:

Wear cool clothing. Make sure to dress in light-weight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, preferably of natural fabrics like cotton.

Keep cool. If you don't have air conditioning, the City of Boston opens [public cooling centers](#) during periods of extreme heat.

Cover windows. During the day, draw the curtains on all windows that are in direct sunlight. Open windows at night and use fans to circulate cooler air.

Avoid direct sun and stay indoors during the hottest hours, 11 AM to 4 PM. When outdoors, make sure it's during cooler hours and that there is shade or cover available.

Eliminate or limit physical activity. If a physician approves light exercise such as walking and movement exercises, limit it to short periods during cooler hours. Eliminate entirely on very hot days.

Drink plenty of fluids. Give the person in your care plenty of water even if they say they're not thirsty. [Be careful with caffeinated drinks](#) such as coffee, tea or energy drinks.

[Monitor medications.](#) Find out if the person's medications increase his or her risk for heat stress. Be sure to ask a physician about all the medications being taken, including over-the-counter items.

Be alert! Remember that a cognitively-impaired person may not be able to tell you when they're feeling hot or ill. Also, older adults tend to feel colder than younger people so they may not sense the danger of hotter weather.

Signs of Heat-Related Illness

If you are caring for an older adult or person with a disability, it's important to [learn the signs of heat-related problems](#). Seek medical assistance for any of the following signs and, if you suspect heat stroke, call 911.

Headache, nausea, and fatigue are common signs of heat stress.

Heat syncope can include sudden dizziness, pale, sweaty-looking skin that is moist and cool to the touch, weakened pulse, and rapid heart rate.

Heat exhaustion can be a warning that the body is getting too hot.

Watch for thirst, giddiness, weakness, lack of coordination, nausea, and profuse sweating. Urination decreases and the person may vomit.

Heat stroke can be life-threatening. Body temperature rises above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and the person may become confused, combative, behave bizarrely, feel faint, and stagger. Pulse is rapid. Skin is dry, flushed and may feel hot. Lack of sweating. Breathing may be fast and shallow. Pupils may widen or dilate.

Important Points to Remember

Older people, people with disabilities, and those with chronic health conditions can have a difficult time dealing with heat and humidity. The temperature inside or outside does not have to be high to put them at risk for a heat-related illness.

Headache, confusion, dizziness, or nausea could be a sign of a heat-related illness. Go to the doctor or to an emergency room to find out if treatment is needed.

To keep heat-related illnesses from becoming a dangerous heat stroke, remember to:

Get out of the sun and into a cool place, ideally air-conditioned.

Drink fluids but avoid alcohol and caffeine.

Shower, bathe, or dab off with cool water.

Lie down in a cool, dark place and rest.

[Signing up for Alert Boston](#) is a great way for caregivers and older adults to be notified in the event of an emergency. If the City of Boston declares an extreme heat event, you will receive a direct message via text, call, or email. For more information on resources, call 3-1-1 or visit boston.gov/heat.

For additional information on keeping your loved one safe, please feel free to [contact Boston Senior Home Care](#). Our Caregiver Advisors will connect you with the resources and expertise you need to navigate your caregiving journey.