

HIGH TEMPERATURES PROVE DANGEROUS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Family, Friends and Neighbors Asked to Monitor Those at Risk

As temperatures reach record highs, the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging urges people to look out for their elderly family, friends, and neighbors.

Older adults are at a higher risk of experiencing heat-related illness. Existing health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity can heighten their vulnerability. Certain prescription and over-the-counter medications can also place a person at increased risk.

High temperatures can place abnormal stress on a person's body. When body temperatures rise even just a few degrees, individuals may experience muscle cramps, dizziness, confusion, and lethargy. This can result in dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and the most severe - heat stroke. Heat stroke can be life threatening and immediate emergency medical attention is vital.

Seniors who live alone and in older homes without air-conditioning are among those most at risk. Check on your elderly neighbors and family members to ensure they are staying hydrated and cool. Offer to take them to an air-conditioned building such as a local designated cooling center, shopping center, library or senior center.

Symptoms of heat related illness could develop over several days or strike during a single burst of strenuous activity. To prevent symptoms of heat stress, people of all ages should:

- Drink plenty of water, even when you may not be thirsty.
- Avoid alcoholic and caffeinated drinks as they cause dehydration.
- Wear clothing that allows good air circulation.
- Limit vigorous activity.
- Try to plan your daily activities prior to 10 a.m. or after 2 p.m.
- If you are outside, seek the shelter of shade.
- Use air-conditioning whenever possible.

The best defense is prevention. To ensure the safety of loved ones, please assist them in taking preventative measures. If illness does occur, please seek immediate medical attention.