

People aged 65 years or older are more prone to heat-related health problems than younger people for several reasons:

- Elderly people do not adjust as well as younger people to sudden changes in temperatures.
- They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat.
- They are more likely to take prescription medicines that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.

### **HEAT STRESS IN THE ELDERLY**

**HEAT STROKE** - The most serious heat-related illness and occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the body loses its ability to sweat, and it is unable to cool down. Body temperatures rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes.

*In the event of heat stroke, call 911. This is a serious medical emergency that can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.*

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STROKE**

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea

**HEAT EXHAUSTION** – A milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days' exposure to high temperatures or unbalanced replacement of fluids.

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION**

- Heavy sweating
- Muscle cramps and weakness
- Tiredness, dizziness, or fainting
- Headache, nausea, or vomiting
- Pulse rate is fast and weak
- Breathing is fast and shallow

*Seek immediate medical attention in the event of heat exhaustion.*

The best defense is prevention. Here are some general guidelines for maintaining well-being when the weather is hot:

**1. DRINK PLENTY OF WATER** – Don't wait until you're thirsty. You lose a lot of water through perspiration. If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink while the weather is hot.

**2. AVOID ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE** – These beverages cause your body to lose more water, as do drinks containing large amounts of sugar.

**3. STAY INDOORS** – If possible, seek an air-conditioned environment. If your home does not have air conditioning, visit the shopping mall or public library. Call your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area. Plan any outside activities during the coolest part of the day, early in the morning or later in the evening.

**4. DRESS COOL** – Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing, sunscreen, and a wide-brimmed hat if you are outdoors.

**5. AVOID STRENUOUS ACTIVITY** – Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink 2-4 glasses of nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. If you are on low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking sports beverages.

**6. KNOW YOUR MEDICATION** – The heat may affect your reaction to certain medications.

**7. HAVE A FRIEND CHECK UP ON YOU** – Plan to have a friend or neighbor check on you at different times of the day when the temperature is extremely high.

### **WHO IS RX OUTREACH?**

Rx Outreach is a non-profit organization that provides affordable medications to people in need. Through the Rx Outreach Program, low-income, uninsured patients have access to over 650 prescription medication strengths through our mail order pharmacy. Rx Outreach serves individuals and families whose income is 300% or less of the federal poverty level. Each year we serve over 80,000 people across all fifty states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.