



## Your SASH Team

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## 7 Tips for Avoiding Elderly Heat Stroke & Exhaustion

Hot weather is dangerous, and seniors are particularly prone to its threat. Elderly heat stroke and heat exhaustion are a real problem. In fact, a recent University of Chicago Medical Center study found that 40% of heat-related fatalities in the U.S. were among people over 65.

There are several reasons for elderly heat vulnerability. People's ability to notice changes in their body temperature decreases with age. Many seniors also have underlying health conditions that make them less able to adapt to heat. Furthermore, many medicines that seniors take can contribute to dehydration. Fortunately, a few simple precautions are all that's needed to keep safe.

### Here are some guidelines for keeping safe in hot weather:

#### Tip One

##### *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.

#### Tip Two

##### *Wear Appropriate Clothes*

An old Swedish saying says, "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes." When it's hot out, wear light-colored, lightweight, loose-fitting clothes and a wide-brimmed hat.

#### Tip Three

##### *Stay Indoors During Mid-day Hours*

During periods of extreme heat, the best time to run errands or be outdoors is before 10am or after 6pm, when the temperature tends to be cooler.

#### Tip Four

##### *Take it Easy*

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

#### Tip Five

##### *Watch the Heat Index*

When there's a lot of moisture in their 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. The current heat index can be found on all popular weather websites, and is also usually announced on local TV and radio weather reports during periods of warm weather.

#### Tip Six

##### *Seek Air-conditioned Environments*

Seniors whose houses aren't air-conditioned should consider finding an air-conditioned place to spend time 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. Seniors without convenient access to any air-conditioned place might consider a cool bath or shower.

#### Tip Seven

##### *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.



The **SASH Model** helps Vermont's seniors and individuals with special needs access the care and support they need to stay healthy while living comfortably and safely at home. SASH communities include a care coordinator and wellness nurse who work in partnership with a team of community providers to assist SASH participants.

