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Caring for Seniors During Extreme Heat

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College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Sciences

Disaster Education Response Team



Caring for Seniors During Extreme Heat

Rita Fleming

Older adults are particularly vulnerable to heat over-exposure. Adults aged 65 and over are 12-13 times more likely to suffer from heat stroke than any other age demographic. Contributing factors can include: limited or no access to timely media about weather emergencies, a medical condition or conditions that can contribute to dehydration, poor ventilation, a lack of access to air-conditioning, and even an unwillingness to turn on air-conditioning units due to a concern about high power costs.

- **Older adults should follow these recommendations:**

- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible. If air-conditioning is not available, contact the local health department for options or locate an air-conditioned shelter in the area.
- Do not rely on a fan as the primary cooling device during an extreme heat event.
- Drink more water than usual. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. It may be too late!
- Check on a friend or neighbor and have someone do the same for you.
- Don't use the stove or oven to cook—it will make you and your house hotter.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take cool showers or baths to cool down.
- Check the local news for health and safety updates.
- Seek medical care immediately if you have, or someone you know has, symptoms of heat-related illness like muscle cramps, headaches, nausea or vomiting.

If you know a senior citizen who lives alone, take the time this summer to check in on them frequently. Offer to help with house-hold chores (especially outside repairs and lawn work) or errands. Let's all be aware and stay involved in our communities. We could very well save a life in the process.

*Go to our website www.tnstate.edu/agriculture for additional
Disaster Education Resources
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