



August 2007 - Newsletter

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Protect Elderly Relatives From Killer Heat

The summer of 2007 is turning out to be one of the hottest on record, particularly in the western states. During the last 20 years, well over 8,000 persons have died in our country due to heat exposure -- more than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined! Extreme heat is defined as an outdoor temperature that hovers 10 degrees or more above the average high temperature and lasts for several weeks under a "dome" of high pressure. The Center for Disease Control reports that the elderly are most at risk because they are less likely to sense and respond to significant changes in temperature. The CDC has devised guidelines to help us protect our elderly relatives and friends as summer temperatures rise:

- **Monitor Those at High Risk:** If you know someone 65 or older, be sure to call them twice a day during heat waves. Be aware that heat induced illness can cause an older person to become confused or disoriented so engage in some discussion. Don't just ask them how they feel.
- **Be Sure that High Risk Individuals Have Adequate Cooling:** Many elderly citizens rely on simple electric fans for relief; but fans only *move* rather than *cool* the air. If air-conditioning equipment is beyond one's budget, contact your local senior center which may be aware of cash grants or have equipment available on loan.
- **Assist with Meal Preparation:** The use of stoves or hot ovens for cooking only adds to the ambient temperature during heat waves. You can greatly assist your elderly loved one by stocking their refrigerators with salads and cold plate items which will preclude the need for heavy cooking and may prove to be more appropriate and appetizing hot weather meals.
- **Become Familiar with Weather Related Terms:** For example, the *heat index* is a temperature in degrees Fahrenheit that tells us how hot it really feels when the humidity is factored in. Thus, the heat index is more significant than the actual air temperature when the well being of those at risk is being considered.
- **Be Ready to Activate a Plan of Action:** Be aware of the symptoms of a heat emergency, including an extremely high body temperature (above 103°, orally); red, hot skin with no sweating; a rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache, dizziness or nausea, and confusion. Don't hesitate to get the person to a medical facility immediately.