

The Summer Sun and Staying Safe

Perhaps you are still participating in your grandchildren's ball games, your own golf games, a neat family cookout or reading a good book in a hammock. Please take note that there is danger lurking for us senior citizens in the form of one of God's greatest gifts—the SUN. Be alert for dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat strokes.

In the heat of the summer choose to wear white linen or cotton shirts and loose clothing. Dark clothing absorbs more heat, while tight clothes do not allow adequate evaporation. If you want protection from ultraviolet rays, choose bright colors instead of white or pastels. They absorb more heat. Special sun-protective clothing uses dyes and chemicals to block harmful UV rays. Some clothes have an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) rating based on how much UV radiation penetrates the skin. If a product has a UPF of 15, around 6.7 percent or 1/15 of the sun's rays will reach you. A UPF rating of 15 is generally considered as good; however, an item must have a UPF of at least 30 to receive the Skin Cancer Foundation's Seal of Recommendation.

Wear sunglasses to prevent UV rays from scorching your corneas. Also wear a wide-rimmed hat to prevent UV rays from hitting the sensitive spots on your face. The brim of your hat needs to be at least three inches wide. These handy hats also help to prevent deeper wrinkles. That's a bonus!

Wear sunscreen whenever you are outdoors. The sun protection factor needs to be at least 30. Use a higher-rated, waterproof sunscreen if you'll be by a pool or beach. These are important points for your grandchildren also. You never stop teaching, especially those you love. Some active ingredients in sun screen that are particularly effective include avobenzone, ecamsule, oxybenzone, and titanium dioxide. When you are putting the sunscreen on, pay particular attention to your nose, ears, shoulders, and back of your neck. A lip balm with PC protection blocks out the sun and keeps moisture on your lips.

Stay hydrated. The heat makes you sweat, which cools you down; however, you are constantly losing fluids. Sip water throughout the day to prevent dehydration or over exhaustion. Also drink sugar-free juice to keep you hydrated and nourished in hot weather. Check the label of the juice bottle to make sure it is 100 percent juice with no sugar added. Avoid alcohol because it does not refresh your body. Alcohol only dehydrates you more. Like alcohol, caffeine also dehydrates you, but it should be fine to drink your morning coffee in moderate amounts. Interestingly, you can check the color of your urine to see how you are managing. The lighter the color of your urine, the better off you are.

You should be eating fruits and vegetables because they are easy to digest and are often high in water content. Include watermelon, strawberries, broths and soups, tomatoes, bell peppers, and drink coconut water. Eating spicy foods may cause you to sweat which cools your body down. Avoid consuming too much fat or salt. Eat mostly chicken breasts in the summer.

Stay out of the sun at peak hours between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Water sports may be especially tricky because you and your grandchildren can become overheated without realizing it. When it is dangerously hot, stay inside with the AC or fan going. Unfortunately, many Texas residents

have experienced electricity outages. If that occurs in your neighborhood, head to the public library or some other public building to cool off.

Krans, Brian. "Beat the Heat: Tips to Stay Cool, Avoid Dehydration, and More."