



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Allegheny County Provides Hot Weather Safety Tips**

**PITTSBURGH** – The Departments of Human Services and Health are providing information and tips in anticipation of the high temperatures forecast this week.

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) encourages residents to be particularly mindful of the elderly as temperatures rise. The agency and its contracted providers will maintain contact with frail, isolated and high-risk seniors who are registered for case management with AAA. Care managers will respond to emergency needs as they arise, making sure that seniors are safe and stable.

Not all older citizens are registered for care management with AAA, making efforts by neighbors, friends and relatives even more important. If you are checking on a senior, keep these tips in mind:

- Offer a glass of water or a non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverage. Sit with the person to drink it. If plain water is boring, try one of the no-calorie fruit flavored waters.
- Check for breathing difficulty or other signs of distress, such as swelling of the ankles, or disorientation. Seek medical attention if need, or call a medical professional for advice if needed.
- Check to see that air conditioning is operating in good order. If there is no air conditioning, make sure that there is good cross-ventilation in the home, aided by fans.
- Check to see that they are eating. If they are not eating because of lack of appetite, try offering light protein-laden foods such as fully-cooked eggs, cottage cheese or lentils.
- If seniors resist visits, encourage them to agree to a few telephone calls each day, but pay attention to whether the person sounds alert and if they can tell you which medicines they have taken. If they are willing, invite them to stay with you until the difficult weather passes.

All county residents, ages 60 and older, are welcome to visit any of the county-funded senior centers during regular hours of operation to socialize and enjoy activities while taking refuge from the heat. Today, Citiparks senior centers are open until 6 PM, but all Citiparks Recreation Centers are open until

9 PM if seniors need additional respite. Additionally, the JCC Squirrel Hill Senior Center is open tonight until 9:30 PM.

A full [list](#) of Allegheny County senior centers can be found on the county's website at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Older-Adults/Senior-Centers.aspx>.

The Allegheny County Health Department is also warning that the heat forecast for the next few days may pose health problems for seniors, infants and children up to the age of four, the overweight, people who work or exercise outdoors, and people with heart or respiratory problems.

Heat-related illness occurs when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. The body normally calls itself by sweating, but sometimes this cooling mechanism breaks down and the body temperature rises rapidly, triggering heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt contained in sweat. Warning signs include heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, fatigue, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting and fainting. Seek medical attention immediately if the symptoms are severe or if the person has heart problems or high blood pressure. Otherwise, help the person cool off and seek medical attention if the symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour.

Heat stroke, a more serious and potentially life-threatening condition, occurs when the body is unable to control its temperature and the sweating mechanism fails. Warning signs may include an extremely high body temperature; red, hot and dry skin due to no sweating; a rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and unconsciousness. Death or permanent disability may result without emergency treatment. Cool the victim rapidly by any means available until paramedics arrive.

The following precautions are recommended to minimize the risk of heat-related illness:

- Stay cool indoors, preferably in an air-conditioned environment. Fans don't help much when temperatures are in the 90s. A cool bath or shower is a more effective way to cool off if you don't have air conditioning. Better yet, visit someplace that does, such as a senior center, theater, mall, library or neighbor's house.
- Drink plenty of fluids, at least eight cups a day, but not alcoholic or caffeinated drinks which actually cause you to lose more fluids. Avoid hot foods and heavy meals which add heat to your body.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing. A wide-brimmed hat provides shade and helps keep the head cool. Sunscreen can prevent sunburn which can affect your body's ability to cool itself and can also cause a loss of body fluids.
- Avoid strenuous physical activity particularly during the hotter part of the day.
- Never leave a child, or a pet, in a vehicle alone on a hot day. A child may become disoriented in just five minutes, unconscious in 10 and brain-damaged in 20.
- Use the buddy system and check on the elderly and the infirm who do not have air conditioning and who are less able to take care of themselves.

For more tips and information on how to stay safe in hot weather, visit <http://www.achd.net/pr/heattips.html> or this helpful article from the American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/news/article/Red-Cross-How-to-Stay-Safe-in-Hot-Weather>.

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