

Prevention of Heat Illness

During periods of high temperature and humidity, there are things everyone (particularly people at high risk) should do to lessen the chances of heat illness:



Stay well hydrated and drink plenty of water.



Limit your time in the sun, especially between 10am and 2pm, when the sun's rays are most intense.



Avoid over-exertion, particularly during warmer periods of the day.



Dress in loose fitting, light-colored clothing and a hat to minimize skin exposed to the sun.



Keep windows shut, and draperies, shades or blinds drawn during the heat of the day; open windows in the evening or night hours when the air outside is cooler.



Move to cooler rooms during the heat of the day.



If not on a low salt diet, sports drinks or salty snacks can help replace salt lost to sweating.



During a heat event, one good way to cool down is to take a bath or shower.

Summer Sun Risks

Many medications, including some antipsychotics and antidepressants, can make your skin more sensitive to the sun, putting you at risk for severe sunburn and placing you at potentially greater risk of skin cancer. You can avoid these risks by doing the following:

- Stay indoors or do not spend much time in the sun.
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs and a hat when in the sun.
- Use a broad spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) value of 15 or higher. Apply as directed.

Air Quality Risks

- Be aware of air quality and check advisories that tell you when the level of air pollution can make breathing difficult, especially if you have a respiratory disease.
- Take recommended actions to reduce exposure, such as staying indoors and avoiding exercise or prolonged exertion when outdoors.

Medication Storage

Heat and humidity can alter potency of your medications. Store medications in a cool and dry place away from direct sunlight.



State of New Jersey

Phil Murphy, Governor

Tahesha L. Way, Lt. Governor



Department of Human Services

Sarah Adelman, Commissioner

Summer Heat and Sun Risks

When Taking Psychiatric Medications



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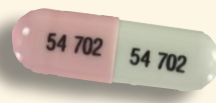
Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Antipsychotic Medications Affect Body Heat Regulation

Antipsychotic medications may impair the body's ability to regulate its own temperature. During hot and humid weather, individuals taking antipsychotic medications (e.g., Haldol, Prolixin, Risperdal, Abilify, Zyprexa, Seroquel, Vraylar, Clozaril, etc.) are at risk of developing excessive body temperature (or hyperthermia), which can be fatal. Individuals with behavioral health conditions and chronic medical conditions (e.g., heart and pulmonary disease, diabetes, alcoholism and other substance use disorders) are especially vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. Medications such as lithium, diuretics, laxatives, and certain oral medications for type 2 diabetes can exacerbate dehydration. Symptoms of severe dehydration include headache, weakness, tremors, and blurry vision.

Lithium

Individuals taking lithium will need to be extra careful during hot weather. Because lithium is a salt, if you lose a lot of fluid quickly through perspiration in hot weather, your lithium level may rise quickly. Signs of lithium toxicity (level too high) include dizziness, unsteadiness, tremor, slurred speech, lethargy, and confusion. Be sure to keep cool and well-hydrated, and get immediate medical help if you have any signs of lithium toxicity.



Prevention of Heat-Related Illness

Heat exhaustion is the most common heat-related condition. Keep in mind, heat-related illnesses can occur before “extreme heat” emergencies are declared.

Heat stroke is a more serious condition of dehydration and salt depletion which occurs mostly during heat waves and can be life threatening.

Heat exhaustion is a more serious condition than the more common heat cramps (uncomfortable muscle spasms), although both result from excessive sweating and inadequate fluid and salt replacement. Because the body is unable to cool itself properly, this condition, if left untreated, can progress to heat stroke.

Heat Stroke is the most serious heat illness that usually occurs during heat waves, and, that can lead to death if an individual is not moved to a cool place and is treated immediately. With heat stroke, the symptoms of heat exhaustion get worse which may lead to more confusion, dizziness, and even unconsciousness.

Signs of Heat Exhaustion

- Irritability or change in behavior
- Low or normal temperature
- Slightly low blood pressure
- Rapid, full pulse and heartbeat
- Cold, pale skin
- Profuse sweating
- Dizziness, headache, and weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdomen and leg cramps

Treatment of Heat Exhaustion

- Move to a cooler place as soon as possible
- Drink water or other liquids (there is no need for salt)
- Stop all activity and rest
- If symptoms increase or lead to confusion, seizures, or unconsciousness, call 911, as these are signs of life-threatening heat stroke.

