



Health and Welfare Alert

Staying Safe in the Summer

It is important to know the facts to prepare for a safe and enjoyable summer for you and those you support.

Fast Facts:

- Every year, children and vulnerable adults die in hot cars when left unattended. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a car's temperature can rise about 20 degrees in just 10 minutes. Even when there is an outside temperature of 70 degrees, the temperature inside your car can reach over 115 degrees. A child can die when his/her body temperature reaches 107 degrees.
- Last year, seven people with IDD died of drowning. In 86 percent of the cases, the victim drowned in a near a body of water (lake, river, pond, or swimming pool) after leaving the family home undetected. Sadly, 70 percent of those who drown were under the age of 5.
- By the time a person becomes thirsty, they are probably dehydrated, having lost as much as one to two percent of their body's water content.
- Approximately every 60 seconds someone in the U.S. sustains a burn injury serious enough to require treatment. During the summer, outside activities like campfires, grills, and fire pits pose additional risks.

Preventing Hot Car Deaths

People with IDD are at high risk to suffer a heat stroke, other injuries, or even die if left unattended in a car during the summer months. Leaving a person alone for less than 10 minutes can cause serious harm as they may not be able to exit the vehicle even when temperatures become dangerously high. They may also not be able to call for help.

Others at risk include infants and young children, elderly adults, and people who are overweight or who have chronic medical conditions including those taking medications such as psychotropic medications and diuretics. Always remember:

- Never leave anyone in a parked car, no matter what the reason or for how long. Cracking the window does not protect people from heatstroke when left in a vehicle during hot temperatures.

- Look before you leave. Always check the entire vehicle (bus, vans, and cars) before exiting the vehicle. Be sure to check between the seats and look for people who may have fallen asleep during transport.
- Always lock the vehicle once you checked it. This will prevent people from going into the vehicle unattended.
- If someone does not show up when expected, check to make sure that they were dropped off and not left in a vehicle.
- If you find someone in a hot car, get the person out and seek medical attention immediately.

[View How Quickly a Hot Car Can Become Deadly](#)



Water Safety

Every day, about 10 people die from unintentional drowning. Of these, two are children aged 14 or younger according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Direct support professionals (DSPs) should know each person's ability to be safe in and around water. For children, some people with Autism, and those who are at risk around water, take the following steps:

- Identify nearby water hazards (bathtubs, pools, hot tubs, and other bodies of water) and ensure that precautions such as locks, pool covers, alarms, and fences are in place and checked frequently.
- Make sure your family, friends, neighbors, service providers, and babysitters know about specific risks (water safety and wandering) so they can ensure safeguards are in place.
- Encourage swimming lessons or water safety classes.
- When swimming is planned, make sure the responsible staff is comfortable being in the water and providing close supervision, and has first aid and CPR training.
- Use life jackets or other flotation devices.
- Watch for someone being too tired, cold, far from safety, getting too much sun, or doing strenuous activity.



Stay Cool, Hydrated, and Informed

According to the CDC, the best prevention for heat-related illnesses is to stay cool, hydrated, and informed. That means

planning outdoor activities carefully, wearing light clothing, taking breaks, and wearing sunscreen. Remember some medications make people more sensitive to the sun. Sunburn affects the body's ability to cool down and can make people dehydrated. Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes prior to going out. Continue to reapply it according to the package directions. Look for sunscreens that say "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels; these products work best.

Preventing Dehydration

Dehydration is the loss of body fluids and electrolytes due to sweating and inadequate intake of water. Drinking alcohol or caffeine, such as coffee, tea, or pop, can make someone dehydrated. People taking diuretics, psychotropics, blood pressure, and laxative medications may be at greater risk for dehydration. If the person's doctor limits the amount they should drink or if they are on a diuretic, ask how much they should drink in hot weather. People with IDD are also at a greater risk as they might not recognize they are thirsty, may have difficulty communicating, are unable to physically get a drink, or depend on others to assist them. Be mindful of the person you are supporting as they may have an adapted cup, special glass, or water bottle they like to drink from. It is not uncommon for people or their caregivers to limit drink intake to avoid having accidents, but this practice can have dangerous consequences including potential for heat related injuries, increased seizures, urinary tract infections, and more. Some signs of dehydration include thirst; decreased urine; dark yellow and/or strong-smelling urine; being dizzy or lightheaded, being tired and our having a dry mouth, lips, and eyes. You can promote good hydration a few ways:

- Encourage eight glasses or more of water and non-caffeinated drinks a day.
- Set a good example by drinking your water and supporting the healthy habits of others around you.
- Build hydration into a routine like offering a drink after the person comes home from work or school.
- Monitor intake to make sure people are drinking enough.
- Be creative and come up with fun ways to drink water including adding sugar-free water enhancers or having goals.



Health and Welfare Alert

Staying Safe in the Summer #2-5-21

Heat Stroke

Signs to look for:

High body temperature (103°F or higher); hot, red, dry, or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion and losing consciousness (passing out).

What to do:

- Call 911 right away; heat stroke is a medical emergency.
- Move the person to a cooler place.
- Help lower the person's temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath.
- Do not give the person anything to drink.

Burn Prevention

Tips when using fire pits, outdoor grills, and campfires:

- Closely supervise people around fires.
- Make sure people and chairs are a safe distance from the fire
- Never leave a fire or grill unattended.
- Don't use your fire pit on windy days, as the wind can could blow sparks on people, trees, or outdoor furniture.

Summer Camps

Proper planning is important when people with developmental disabilities are attending camp. The following steps may help ensure an enjoyable experience:

- Be familiar with the camp and possible dangers for the people attending. If there is a pond, lake, or pool, discuss the person's abilities in the water with the camp director.
- Know who will be supervising the individual and what experience they have. Be sure you are comfortable with what will be occurring.
- Communicate any dietary requirements, supervision requirements, medical needs, or behavior issues.
- Be sure that sunscreen and bug bite spray is provided or available. Be aware of any medications that increase a person's sensitivity to the sun and communicate this to the camp staff.

Insects

- Bees, wasps, and hornets can cause medical emergencies if they sting. Know beforehand if someone is allergic and be prepared with what to do.
- For everyone else, remove the stinger promptly. Use a flat edge, such as a credit card, to scrape it from the place it is embedded. Wash and apply ice.
- Be sure to use insect repellent when outdoors. Sprays that contain DEET are highly effective and toxic.