



Western Reserve

Area Agency on Aging

Summer Safety For Older Adults

Did you know that these warm and sunny summer days in Northeast Ohio can benefit your health and well-being? Sunlight increases your body's vitamin D levels, which can help strengthen bones, boost your immune system, and prevent cancer. Sunlight also helps regulate your *circadian rhythms*, which can improve your sleep patterns, reduce stress, and improve mood. When exposed to sunlight, your body also produces more *serotonin*, a neurotransmitter that's linked to mood and mental health. *Serotonin* can make you feel happier, calmer, and more focused.

However, too much of a good thing can have negative consequences, too. It is common knowledge that sun exposure can lead to sunburn and even *melanoma*—a type of skin cancer. In addition, high summer heat can result in heat cramps and heat rashes, as well as more serious conditions like heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Certain medications can also cause issues during hot weather. These medications include diuretics, a variety of heart medications, diabetes treatments including pills and insulin, psychoactive substances such as antidepressants, antihistamines for allergies, and high blood pressure medication. Risks like these do not mean you have to stay inside all summer; just follow the tips below to stay safe!

- Whenever possible, limit outdoor activities to the **coolest times of the day**, such as early morning and evening.
- Drink plenty of fluids! Regardless of how thirsty you *feel*, warmth and sunlight can deplete your body's fluids faster. Do your best to drink **six to eight glasses of fluids** per day, and limit caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, as these tend to dehydrate you quicker.
- When outside, wear lightweight, light-colored clothing, a wide-brim hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses to keep cool and protect your skin and eyes from the sun.
- **Take breaks inside** with air conditioning. If you do not have air conditioning, try to keep your home cool by closing blinds, turning on fans to circulate the air, and avoiding cooking. Your city will likely have **cooling centers** available during the summer—call your city office or **Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging's** Aging and Disability Resource Center at **800-626-7277** to find cooling centers near you.

Advocacy. Assistance. Answers on Aging and Disabilities.