

ANYONE CAN FALL

Prevent it from happening to you

Staying Safe During Extreme Heat

Heat-related illnesses pose a significant risk, particularly for older adults whose bodies struggle to cope with extreme heat. As we age, our body's ability to regulate body temperature diminishes, making us more susceptible to heat-related illnesses like heat rash, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Chronic health issues and certain prescription medications can further increase risk, as they can impair the body's natural cooling mechanisms and increase vulnerability to heat-related complications. Signs and symptoms of heat illness include muscle cramps, headache, lack of coordination, dizziness, and fainting. Unfortunately, these health effects can also increase our risk of falls and fall related injuries. It's important know what to do if you or a loved one shows any of these changes. In addition, it's recommended to take steps as soon as possible to prepare your home and protect yourself from extreme heat so that you can safely enjoy the warm season.

FALLS ARE NOT A NORMAL PART OF AGING.
Talk to your health care provider if you have had a fall.

Finding Balance NOVA SCOTIA Trauma NB

Tips to protect yourself during a heat wave

- Have a plan before the extreme heat. Know where you can go to spend some time in a cool place or in an air-conditioned location (i.e., a friend or family member's house, public library, cooling centre), and who you can call if you need support.
- Get out of the sun. If you need to be outside, choose a cooler location like a place with tree shade. Consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat and make sure to apply sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher and do so 15 minutes before sun exposure. To help protect your skin all day, don't forget to reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours.
- Keep hydrated. Drink plenty of cool fluids and consume before thirst sets in to help your body sweat and keep a normal body temperature. Water is the best source. Avoid alcohol use since it can affect your body's ability to regulate your temperature.
- Wear lightweight, loose, and light-coloured clothing. Wearing light-coloured, breathable clothing such as white, beige, and yellow made from cotton, linen, and silk helps reflect the solar heat away from the body and promotes airflow.
- Take it easy during the hottest parts of the day. Try to schedule exercise or physical labor for cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or evening.

Preparing your home for the heat

- If you have an air conditioner, make sure it works properly and use it when needed.
- Be aware that fans alone may not provide enough cooling when the temperature and humidity inside the home are too high.
- Keep the sun out by covering your windows. Consider blackout curtains, window films, or tinfoil to reflect heat from the sun.
- Keep the windows closed in the daytime if the outdoor temperature is hotter than the indoor temperature.
- If it is safe to do so, open the windows, blinds, and shutters to allow cooler air in when the outside temperature is cooler than what it is inside.
- Avoid using the oven for cooking meals.

Lending a helping hand

High temperatures can be especially dangerous to vulnerable individuals. You are encouraged to check on your neighbours, friends, and family by phone or in person during extreme heat events to ensure they are cool, hydrated, and safe. Those living in an apartment with no air conditioning are at greater risk.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency! Call 911 immediately if needed. While waiting for help, try to cool the person right away by applying cold water to large areas of the skin and fanning the person as much as possible. If you can, move them to a cool place.

SCAN for the website

For more fall prevention information and **resources for older adults and caregivers**, visit the Finding Balance NS website at ***www.FindingBalanceNS.ca***

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