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SAFE SUMMER TIPS FOR SENIORS

By Rebecca Williams, *Facility Director of Barton Woods Assisted Living*



Summertime is finally here! The summer months are a time of fun, adventure, and relaxation for many, but they also bring a source of stress for older adults and their caregivers. This is because older adults are more prone to heat stress and need to be exceedingly careful with activities in the summer heat. Thankfully, you can help your older loved ones enjoy this summer season and stay healthy with Barton Woods Assisted Living's safe summer tips for seniors.

STAY HYDRATED

Seniors are more susceptible to dehydration than younger people because they do not sweat or recognize thirst as effectively as they used to. Many seniors take diuretics, which cause their body to lose fluids quickly. To prevent dehydration, make sure seniors drink plenty of water prior to heading outside and throughout their summer outdoor activities. If your loved one is comfortable, alert, and acting normally, water is enough to keep them hydrated. If your loved one is sweating excessively, giving them Gatorade or Pedialyte with electrolytes may be needed to help them stay hydrated.

SUN PROTECTION

The fatty layer below our skin gets thinner with age, making seniors more sensitive to the dehydrating effects of sun exposure. Because of this, have your loved one use at least 30 SPF sunscreen and cover all exposed areas. This includes forgotten spots like ears, backs of hands, and tops of feet. Having your loved one wear loose, light-colored clothes,

sunglasses, and a hat with a brim will help keep them comfortable and provide additional protection from the sun.

MEDICATION PRECAUTIONS

Some medications can cause sun sensitivity as a side effect, others may have effects that will be exacerbated by the hot summer weather, such as dehydration and muscle cramps. Increased temperatures and humidity can cause some medications to spoil or lose effectiveness. Because of this, speaking to your loved one's physician or pharmacist about their medications can help you avoid an unwanted incident this summer.

KNOW WHEN TO STAY INSIDE

Being outdoors is proven to boost mood and is a great source of vitamin D. It is a great way for seniors to safely spend time with friends during the pandemic, as well. On very hot days, it is best for them to limit outdoor time to early in the morning or later in the evening. The sun is strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., according to the EPA, so it is a good idea to spend those hours indoors on a hot and humid summer day. Keep an eye on the forecast and take advantage of cooler times of the day by watching the sunrise, sunset and taking morning or evening walks. Be sure to still bring a bottle of water along to avoid dehydration.



WATCH FOR SYMPTOMS

During the summer, you should watch for a range of symptoms associated with heat-related illness. Knowing what to look for can help avoid these illnesses in your loved one. These symptoms

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include excessive sweating, fatigue, dizziness, intense thirst, cramps, clammy skin, nausea, and vomiting. Heat stroke is a severe heat-related illness that can be fatal if not treated in a timely manner. Heatstroke symptoms include no sweating, body temperature over 103 degrees, red or hot and dry skin, throbbing headache, confusion, lethargy, and fainting. If your loved one starts to feel any of these symptoms, get them inside and assess the situation. Medical help may be needed.

Ultimately, summer calls for being especially vigilant in looking

out for your elderly loved ones. Giving them a little extra TLC and following Barton Woods' summer safe tips will help to ensure you and your loved one can enjoy all the benefits of summer while staying happy, healthy, and safe.

If you want to talk more in depth about what the summer months mean for your elderly loved one or are looking for professional help in caring for your aging family member as the summer heat rolls in, contact Barton Woods Assisted Living at 9472 Kochville Road in Freeland. Give us a call (989) 695-5380 or email rwilliams@bartonwoods.org.

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