

Weather Safety for Older Adults

Summer Fall Risks

Severe summer weather and conditions can increase your risk of falling. Falls are not a normal part of aging, but as we age, we may be more susceptible to serious injury from a fall. An older Ohioan falls every two minutes, and someone is injured in a fall every five minutes. However, most falls can be prevented when you understand your risks and take steps to remove or avoid hazards.

- **Heat, dehydration and dizziness** – Heat and dehydration can make you dizzy, which can lead to falls. Drink plenty of liquids and seek cool shelter during the hottest part of the day.
- **Storms** – Summer storms can cause a variety of tripping hazards from power outages to debris in outdoor walkways.
- **Flooding** – Never walk or drive into flood waters! Still water can make you trip and moving water can knock you off your feet.
- **Increased activity** – Now that warm weather is here, you are likely to be more active. Ask your doctor or physical therapist about strategies to safely increase your activity levels.

Extreme heat *IS* severe weather

People age 65 years and older are at higher risk for heat stress than younger people due to natural body changes, chronic conditions, medications and more. Heat-related illnesses can be life-threatening and include heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

To avoid heat-related illness:

- Drink plenty of cool, non-alcoholic beverages.
- Wear lightweight clothing and rest frequently.
- Remain indoors in the heat of the day and avoid strenuous activity.
- Take a cool shower, bath or sponge bath.
- Seek an air-conditioned environment.

Symptoms of heat-related illness include nausea, weakness, lightheadedness, rapid heart beat, unusual skin temperature, headache and disorientation. If you or a loved one experience these or other symptoms, seek medical help immediately, move to a cool environment and drink plenty of fluids.

Check on your neighbors

For a variety of reasons, older friends and relatives may have a harder time adjusting during extreme conditions than younger people do. If severe weather is forecasted or has just occurred, check in on older friends and family members to ensure that they are okay and that they have the resources they need to stay safe and healthy.

Do a risk assessment:

- Do they need medical attention?
- Do they have safe food and water?
- Is the temperature in their home comfortable?
- Who will they call if they need help?



STEADY U Ohio is a statewide initiative to prevent falls among older adults. Take a falls risk self-assessment, sign up for news and resources, interact on Facebook and Twitter and get a variety of falls-prevention tips.

www.steadyu.ohio.gov