

[Home](#) » [Lifestyle](#) » [Seniors](#)

OLDER AND WISER: Have fun in the sun, just not a ton

For older adults it's important to stay sun safe

[Margaret Coates](#) / Contributing writer

JULY 4, 2018 04:48 PM



Summer gives us an opportunity to just have fun and relax, but seniors should be aware of some of the pitfalls of too much heat and sun. file photo Rebecca Blisset, Vancouver Courier

Summer is here for the North Shore and for seniors it's a chance to get out and move without an umbrella, warm coat or other cold weather gear.

Summer also gives an opportunity to just have fun and relax. Even though I'm writing this column on a rainy June day, this summer promises to be hot and dry, according to the weather reports, and seniors should be aware of some of the pitfalls of too much heat and sun.

According to June Fletcher at AgingCare.com: "Part of the problem lies in the fact that older people simply can't handle the heat as well as younger ones, because they don't sweat as effectively and have poorer circulation. Obesity, heart disease, dementia, diabetes and other chronic medical conditions can compound the risk. So can certain medications, especially diuretics or those prescribed for hypertension and Parkinson's disease."

There are many tips for staying safe during the hot days and one of the most important is to stay hydrated.

Research has shown that seniors are more susceptible to dehydration than younger people because they lose their ability to conserve water as they age.

They can also become less aware of their thirst and have difficulty adjusting to temperature changes.

Water is best, as both alcohol and caffeine can cause dehydration.

Be aware of heat stroke or illness.

According to Health Canada, symptoms of heat illness could include dizziness or fainting, nausea or vomiting, headache, rapid breathing and heartbeat, extreme thirst and decreased urination with unusually dark yellow urine. Health Canada suggests: "If you have any of these symptoms during extreme heat, move to a cool place and drink liquids right away".

Staying cool is a way to avoid too much heat especially if you don't have air conditioning at home.

Try going to a movie (great way to relax), walking in an indoor mall, with the added bonus of getting exercise, or visiting North Shore libraries which offer programs and other services for seniors as well as comfy places to read a good book.

There are some great summer reading lists on line (who says seniors aren't accessing the internet?).

Staying cool also requires dressing for the weather. Try finding natural fabrics as they tend to be cooler than synthetic.

Try light coloured and loose fitting clothes that will help you feel cooler and more comfortable.

If you want to keep up your exercise program (and who doesn't) make sure to walk or garden in the early morning or later in the day when the sun is not so hot or has gone down.

Remember to use a broad spectrum sunscreen and wear hats and protective, but loose, lightweight clothing.

Go to the pool for swimming or aquasizes, which gets your body temperature down and gives you the movement you want.

Keep in touch with people so that they are aware of your movements during the hot months ahead.

Arrange for regular visits by family members, neighbours, or friends during very hot days in case you need assistance.

Visitors can help identify signs of heat illness that could be missed over the phone.

Check on your elderly neighbours to see if they are okay during the heat.

The added bonus is the social contact you and they will get.

If you are at home use more fans, keep the sun out with drapes and screens, and avoid using your oven. Take cool (not too hot or cold) showers or baths if your house is too hot.

You can keep cool by misting your skin (my personal favourite) with a spray bottle or using cool wet washcloths or towels and put them on your wrists, ankles, armpits and neck.

Seniors who are experiencing vision issues should be aware of the dangers of too much exposure to the sun which can irritate eyes and cause further damage. But for all seniors, wearing sunglasses can protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.

Let's all have a safe and fun summer.

I for one am looking forward to a good read in a comfy spot at my favourite park or beach.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 48 years and has worked for and with seniors for 21 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome Email: lions_view@telus.net.

© 2018 North Shore News

[Sign up for the North Shore News FREE digital newsletter to receive top headlines from each issue in your Inbox.](#)