

# OLDER AND WISER: Here comes the sun-sense advice column

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file photo Lisa King, North Shore News

It's that time of year again where we're compelled to enjoy the sunshine and all the wonderful activities offered on the North Shore.

Of course, the caveat is: don't overdo your exposure to the sun and heat.

Experiencing nature is good for your health and may reduce mortality, according to a recent article in *On Health: Consumer Reports*. The piece states that "exposure to parks, forests and any other green spaces was associated with reduced mortality from heatstroke, cardiovascular disease and diabetes among older adults."

Living in an urban environment or having mobility issues doesn't have to stop you from enjoying nature. Experiencing nature provides opportunities to socialize with friends. Socializing helps people from becoming isolated. According to a new resource developed by the Nanaimo Senior Connect group and funded by New Horizons: "Social isolation can put seniors at greater risk of death than factors such as obesity and physical inactivity. One study found evidence that shows that lacking social connections can increase one's chances for early death to a similar degree to smoking 15 cigarettes a day."

So, if you are mobile and you want some activity with others, try a walking or cycling group organized by your nearest Seniors Centre. On your own, or better yet with a friend or family member, visit some of my

favourite rambles near the ocean such as the Maplewood Mud Flats, Harbourside Walk or the West Vancouver Seawalk. These are easy and accessible walks for seniors and those with a disability.

Spending time in your garden may be of benefit to seniors. It's a fun way to get out into nature and provides a means of exercising. It can improve endurance, strengthen bone health and reduces stress. You could also join a garden club which will keep your social life active. If you don't have a garden, watering your potted plants on your windowsill or balcony could also be good for you.

Getting out and about in your neighbourhood is good for your physical and mental health. Try visiting a gallery on the North Shore. The Gordon Smith Gallery in North Vancouver and the Polygon Gallery at the foot of Lonsdale are great places to see original art. These galleries have outdoor space and seating around them so you can get your culture and nature hits all in one package.

You might want to join the walk with the Shipyard Pals, an entertaining walk that combines "laughter and insight into the Yard during the hectic WWII years. Actors will also entertain with stories of risky mountain adventures and streetcar escapades at parks and plazas through the summer," according to North Vancouver Museum and Archives. Or after viewing the art at Polygon, try walking along the pathway past the Quay and SeaBus area to Waterfront Park and along the Spirit Trail, which has been extended west through the Mosquito Creek Marina to link up with Harbourside Park.

Getting to and from these activities may involve being outdoors in the heat. In order to be safe during these times, remember to wear a hat, use sunscreen, wear loose lightweight clothing and drink plenty of fluids. According to the On Health: Consumer Reports articles: "Aging can dull your sense of thirst and temperature, increasing your risk of heatstroke, which can be dangerous or even deadly." 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".

Drink water (best form of liquid) throughout the day. The Consumer Report recommends about 75 ounces per day for a 150-pound person.

Staying cool and trying to stay active might involve combining activities. Near the Polygon Gallery is a fun water park for people-watching, and maybe you might dip your toes in if you are feeling too hot – you're never too old to have fun. While walking near the water, sit for a while and experience the cooling breeze.

For seniors though, if the weather is too hot and you want to exercise you might try walking around a cool mall, going to a movie (with air conditioning), or going to the pool for swimming or aquacise, which gets your body temperature down and gives you the movement you want without stressing your joints.

Summer is a great season, but take care, have fun and stay cool.

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