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Stay Fit and Keep Your Cool

Summer in Kansas brings long days, plenty of sunshine, and soaring temperatures. If you're like me, taking a walk outdoors is much more enjoyable than exercising on a treadmill inside. However, Kansas heat can quickly make an outdoor walk or jog uncomfortable—and sometimes even dangerous. That's why it's important to take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, especially for adults over age 65.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older adults are at greater risk for heat-related illnesses. As we age, our bodies become less efficient at regulating temperature. Older adults may not adjust as well to sudden temperature changes and are more likely to have chronic health conditions that affect the body's ability to stay cool. Certain prescription medications can also interfere with temperature regulation and sweating. Even healthy, active adults should take extra precautions when exercising during extreme heat.

The key is finding ways to stay active while avoiding excessive heat exposure. Consider these tips to help you stay cool and safe while exercising this summer:

Tips for Exercising Safely in Hot Weather

- Exercise during the coolest parts of the day, such as early morning or late evening.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, and light-colored clothing.
- Use exercise apps or workout videos to stay active indoors.
- Add movement to your day by walking or marching in place during television commercials or other breaks.
- Stay hydrated by drinking water before, during, and after exercise.
- Wear sunscreen to protect your skin from harmful UV rays.
- Whenever possible, choose shaded routes or areas for outdoor activities.

If you are not accustomed to exercising in the heat, consider moving your workout indoors rather than risking heat exhaustion or heat stroke. It is also important to recognize the signs of heat-related illness.

Signs of Heat Exhaustion

If someone is experiencing heat exhaustion, move them to a cooler location, loosen or remove excess clothing, sip cool water, and cool the body with wet cloths, cool water, or mist. Seek medical attention if symptoms do not improve.

Common symptoms include:

- Dizziness or fainting
- Extreme thirst
- Heavy sweating
- Cool, pale, clammy skin
- Nausea
- Weakness
- Muscle cramps