



## Heat, Sun and Water

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None of us take vacations from our medications during the summer months. We actually need to be more mindful and watchful during the warmer months for a number of reasons. The reasons we need that extra care are the reasons we consider summers so special, the heat, the sun and water.

During the warmer months, we lose much more of our body's fluids by evaporation. The results of "water pills" or diuretics can be more profound during the summer months since many people limit their fluid intake in an attempt to manage bathroom visits.

Dehydration or lack of fluids may lead to lightheadedness. Others describe a racing heart, which may be caused by the heart pumping against a smaller volume of fluid. Additionally, constipation normally caused by not consuming enough fluids may be worsened during the summer months and even more so when certain medications are used.

Fluids are needed to keep the kidneys and other parts of our circulation system in proper function and to assure more regular bowel and bladder habits. Every one of all ages is encouraged to consume more fluids during the summer months. Should you experience lightheadedness or rapid heart beats, consider these conditions serious and report how you feel to your healthcare provider. Always be sure to report the amount of fluid you consume daily when you experience these conditions and if these conditions improve when you consume additional fluid.

During the summer months, everyone should be cautious when out in the sun. Some medications, usually those that are applied to the skin may cause inflammation of the skin. But, these skin reactions may also occur to areas not exposed to the sun which may cause you not to think of the items used on your skin as the reason for the reaction. Some sunscreens may also cause these problems with time. Be mindful of the fact that these reactions can occur with any medication that you take or apply. Reactions may occur with topical

tetracycline and some sulfur-based products, medications that are taken orally may also cause this response; a few well-known examples are amiodarone, sulfur compounds and tetracyclines, thiazide diuretics, and some anti-diabetic agents.

For this reason, during the sunny months, it is extremely important to ask your healthcare provider about being out in the sun when starting a new medication. How you might react is often dependent on the dose of medication used and how long it has been used. In addition, the frequency, length and intensity of sun exposure can alter how you might react.

Preventing reactions caused by the use of certain medications is similar to preventing sunburn; you should avoid prolonged sun exposure if you have an increased potential to burn. Good prevention includes discussing the need to avoid exposure to the sun, wear protective clothing (including hats), and use of sunscreen products. Tanning beds should be avoided when using medications that cause photosensitivity. Always take extra precaution when new medications are started and when you expect to be in the sun.

Another caution to heed during the summer months is that some medications alter how you might respond to heat and humidity. Medications such as haloperidol, thioridazine and several others may cause you not to sweat, the release of heat is suppressed and individuals can overheat. While taking these medications, overheating may result in heat stroke. Use extra care to prevent becoming overheated from sun exposure, exercise or hot weather. Wear cool clothes and keep a cool non-alcoholic beverage handy while taking these meds during the warmer weather.

Just remember, medications are only a part of a healthcare plan. The proper use of medications is as important to achieve desired results as the medications used. Be informed about the medication used and realize that medications many times do not cure medical problems but treat conditions and slow the decline in health when used properly. Medications may be used differently to get better results and fewer side effects. Today's seniors are always encouraged to seek the support and direction from health professionals specially trained to address the results and side effects of the medications they take.

So....enjoy the sunny months, just know the medications and other chemicals that you use. Know what you might need to watch for and take the necessary precautions to make your sunny months more fun.