

# Medications and Heat

## Environmental Health – Factsheet

### Why are medications a concern when it's hot?

Medications used to treat mental health conditions, seizures, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, high blood pressure and cardiac conditions, including angina and arrhythmias, can affect the body's ability to adapt to heat. Drugs for some other health conditions may also increase your risk of heat illness.

It's important to ask your health care provider or pharmacist whether the medication you're taking affects your ability to cope with heat.

### What can I do to protect myself ?

You can reduce your risk of heat related illness by:

- **Staying aware and being prepared**
  - Know daytime and night-time temperatures – both outdoors and indoors – by checking your local weather forecasts and the thermostat in your home.
  - Stay up to date on weather alerts so you know when to take extra-care.
  - If you have an air-conditioner, make sure it's working properly before the hot weather starts.
- **Staying hydrated**
  - Drink plenty of water (that's the best liquid) before you feel thirsty.
- **Staying cool and keeping out of the sun**
  - Plan outdoor activities for cooler parts of the day, but remember to wear insect repellent since mosquitoes are out too.
  - If you are outdoors during the hottest part of the day, shade yourself from the sun with an umbrella or a wide-brimmed hat with lots of ventilation (to allow the sweat on your head to evaporate), wear loose-fitting, breathable, light-coloured clothing, and remember to wear sunscreen to limit ultra-violet (UV) ray exposure.
  - If there is no air-conditioning at home, go to a cool place such as an air-conditioned mall, public library, or community centre.
  - Take a cool bath or shower or go for a swim to cool off.
- Avoid using your oven or other appliances that could heat your home more.
- Limit physical activities during the hotter parts of the day or exercise in an air-conditioned place.
- **Taking care of yourself**
  - During hot weather, stay in contact with family members, neighbours or friends – especially if you live alone. Let them know immediately if you are not feeling well. Make sure they know if you are taking a drug that makes you more sensitive to heat.
  - Continue taking your medication when it's hot out. Talk to your health care provider if you are concerned about the drug you are taking.
  - Share this fact sheet with the people around you so they can recognize heat illness.
  - Avoid using hot tubs and saunas and limit exposure to other hot environments.
  - Contact Health Links-Info Sante or your health care provider if you have questions about your health.
- **Knowing the symptoms of too much heat and getting help early**
  - Some of the symptoms of a heat illness include:
    - headache,
    - nausea,
    - dizziness,
    - weakness or tiredness,
    - fainting,
    - confusion,
    - swelling of the ankles, feet or hands,
    - muscle cramps,
    - rapid breathing or rapid pulse
    - dehydration, and
    - elevated body temperature.

**If you experience these symptoms, get help immediately.** Heat illness can be fatal and urgent medical attention may be needed. While waiting for help to arrive, move to a cool or shaded place immediately, drink sips of water, lie down and sponge yourself with cool water, if possible.

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## Where can I get more information?

For more information on heat and your health:

Manitoba Government:

[www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/heat.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/heat.html)

Health Canada:

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/heat-chaleur-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/heat-chaleur-eng.php)

Call Health Links-Info Santé at 788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257