

Spotlight



MEDICATION, HOT WEATHER AND YOU: TIPS FOR A SAFE SUMMER

A REMINDER FOR THE CONSUMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Your Body Temperature

During hot weather, sweating is your body's way of cooling down to maintain a normal temperature (98.6). Some psychiatric medication may interfere with your body's ability to maintain a normal temperature by blocking your sweat glands. If you are taking psychiatric medications such as Mellaril (thioridazine), Haldol (haloperidol) and Thorazine (chlorpromazine), you are at risk of developing high body temperatures that can be dangerous if ignored.

Cooling measures that may be effective include the following:

- Cool, nonalcoholic beverages, as directed by your health care provider
- Rest
- Cool shower, bath or sponge bath
- An air-conditioned environment
- Lightweight clothing
- Avoid alcohol because it can make the problem worse!

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion can develop quite suddenly and symptoms can last for only a short period of time with a quick recovery: or last much longer and be more severe. The following are signs of heat exhaustion:

- Skin may be pale, cool and moist
- Breathing is fast and shallow
- Pulse is fast and weak
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Heavy sweating
- Fainting
- Headache

WHAT TO DO: Cool the body and get medical attention!

CHILDREN TOO

Children taking certain psychiatric medications are especially at risk of developing heat related problems. They produce more body heat to begin with and when the weather is hot, their temperature can rise much faster compared to an adult.

Some of the older neuroleptic (antipsychotic) medications prescribed for children (i.e., Haldol and Orap (pimo zide) and some medications used to treat depression (i.e., Anafranil and Tofranil (imipramine) may lead to heat related problems such as overing and sunburn. Since children tend to spend the summer months outdoors so a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher) and clothing that protects their skin is a must! If children are swimming, the sunscreen should be waterproof and reapplied as needed.

Children who take mood stabilizers, such as Lithium or Depakote (divalproex) need to be especially careful to drink enough fluids during hot weather. The sun can damage children's eyes as well as their skin. Wearing sunglasses, hats and lightweight protective clothing can help minimize these effects.

IMPORTANT: If you notice your child being confused, slurring his or her speech, losing his or her balance or trembling, he or she may be seriously dehydrated and should receive medical treatment immediately!