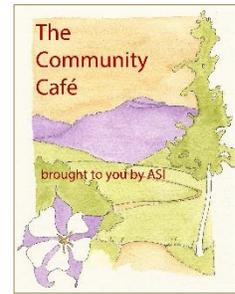


PRESS RELEASE

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NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY CAFÉ

Beating the Heat – Don't Let It Take You Down

Our bodies are designed to work hard to maintain an even internal temperature. Heat stroke is serious business, so knowing how to prevent it, the warning signs of it occurring, and what to do about heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be lifesaving. The simple, common sense answer of course is “stay cool and hydrated.” Sounds easy enough – but it is more complicated than that.

Understand your risk level. Healthy people can be adversely affected by heatwaves, as can those who are very young and those 60 and better. Some medications and some long-term health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and dementia can lead to greater risk. As the body heats up, blood vessels close to the skin open to transfer heat back to the environment – this makes the heart work harder. Sweating takes place for the same reason. In our dry climate, many people do not realize they are becoming dehydrated because the sweat evaporates immediately. For those not acclimated to high altitude, symptoms from heat are exacerbated and may be hard to distinguish from altitude sickness. Residences may remain quite warm at night if they heat up during the day. When it fails to cool down sufficiently at night, this places greater stress on the body. Even during rest, at 85 degrees, the body can lose nearly a half-gallon of water overnight.

Prevention tips.

- Reduce or eliminate alcohol consumption, as it can increase dehydration and worsen the effects of heat.
- Plan outdoor activities in the cooler parts of the day. If you work outdoors, try to plan heavier tasks during cooler hours.
- Help keep your indoor environment cool – opening windows at night and closing the southern and western facing windows and drapes during the heat of the day.
- Learn if your medicines put you at greater risk – diuretics, statins, lithium, and medications for hypertension, epilepsy, and Parkinson’s are all examples of drugs that can cause changes in the body that may make it harder for the body to sustain a healthy temperature.

Signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

- Tiredness, dizziness, fainting, confusion, irritability, visual problems, nausea, muscle cramps, headache.
- Other mild symptoms may include itchy heat rash and/or swollen feet and hands.
- Being dehydrated changes the balance of key minerals in the body, which can lead to seizures, loss of consciousness, or heart failure, and may result in death.
- Someone with heat stroke may stop sweating altogether, depriving them one of the body’s main cooling mechanisms.

What to do. If you, or someone you are with, is experiencing mild heat exhaustion symptoms, try to cool down. Basic first steps – Get into shade. Sit or lie down and raise feet. Take fluids. Place cool cloths or packs on armpits, wrists, ankles, the back of the neck. Heat exhaustion that cannot be alleviated may be a symptom of heat stroke that may require immediate medical intervention.

Our website provides information about ASI programs in Archuleta County and contact information for making reservations at The Community Café for take-out and for Meals on Wheels at: <http://www.psseniors.org/>.

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