

Area Bloggers



[TOP](#)

Age Spots - The Heat is On by Jackie Dover

JULY 13TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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July, a month know for family vacations, fireworks, cookouts and hot, humid temperatures. As a kid I loved July, freedom from school and I could stay outside playing much later than normal. As I have gotten older July has definitely dropped in favor. I now have work to do and the heat and humidity that is Southeast Missouri affects me in ways I never worried about as a child.

Keeping cool in the Summer months can be difficult. The best way to keep cool is to stay in an air-conditioned area. This could be a home, the mall, a library or senior nutrition center. In extreme heat waves, cooling centers may be set up in your community; these will be announced as needed.

Drinking more fluids, especially water is also recommended, regardless of your activity level. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink. Some may be on water pills or have conditions where their doctor limits how much fluid they can have, speak with your doctor about how much you should drink, while the weather is hot.

Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. It is also a good idea to a wear wide-brimmed hat and sun-block with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, if you will be outside. This will protect you from sunburn. If you do need to be outside, try to plan to do so in the morning or evening hours when it is cooler and the sun is not at its strongest. And I would be remiss if I did not remind everyone to not leave people or pets in cars in the Summer, the temperature in vehicles can soar in minutes.

Even with precautions we can become over heated. Watch for the warning signs of Heat Exhaustion:

- Heavy sweating, paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Weakness
- Cold, pale and clammy skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

If you see any of these signs move to a cooler location, lie down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths to as much of the body as possible and sip water.

A more serious condition is Heat Stroke, if anyone shows these signs you would need to call 911 immediately. Get the person to a cooler place and put cool cloths on them or even put them in a cool bath. The signs of heat stroke are:

- High body temperature (above 103 degrees)
- Hot, red skin (moist or dry)
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Dizziness or confusion
- Possible unconsciousness

The hot Summer months can be dangerous but there are some fun things to do that you can't do the other seasons. My grandparents always had a large glass jug of sun tea all Summer long. Just throw some teabags and water in a jug and place it where it can sit in the sun and let the sun do all the work. It is also fun to throw in some mint or other flavors to mix it up once in awhile.

And Summer just screams for homemade ice cream. We always did the crank kind which seemed to take forever, but the results were pure heaven. It is much easier now as there are electric versions that require almost no effort. The flavor possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

So remember as we make it through the "dog days of Summer" to have fun and be safe and enjoy the freedom that Summer allows.

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