



## Summer Safety Alert #02-06-23

Good preparation is key to summer safety for people with developmental disabilities, so they can avoid health risks such as dehydration, sunburn, and water-related accidents.

### Fast Facts:

- In 2022, four people with IDD died of drowning. Seventy-five percent of those who drowned were under the age of 13.
- Every year, children and vulnerable adults die in hot cars when left unattended. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a car's temperature can rise by about 20 degrees in just 10 minutes. Even when there is an outside temperature of 70 degrees, the temperature inside your car can reach over 115 degrees.
- By the time a person becomes thirsty, they are probably dehydrated, having lost as much as one to two percent of their body's water content.
- Approximately every 60 seconds, someone in the U.S. sustains a burn injury (from activities like campfires, grills, and fire pits) serious enough to require treatment.
- According to the CDC, every year, an estimated one in six Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases.

### Dehydration

Dehydration is the loss of body fluids and electrolytes due to sweating and an inadequate intake of water. Drinking alcohol or caffeine, such as coffee, tea, or pop, can make someone dehydrated.

*Some signs include:*

- Heat exhaustion
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting



- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Decreased urine output or urine that is concentrated and appears dark
- Sunken eyes
- Wrinkled or saggy skin; decreased skin elasticity
- Extreme dryness in the mouth
- Fever or temperature higher than 102 degrees
- Severe pain or blistering of the skin

If dehydration is suspected, rehydration is the key to preventing further complications. Remember to drink at least eight glasses of water per day.

Sunstroke or heat stroke, is a serious, life-threatening condition when the body is exposed to hot temperatures for long periods of time. If sun or heat stroke is suspected, seek medical attention immediately for this condition, which occurs as a result of overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays. Risk of sunburn is higher for people with fair skin, blue eyes, and red or blonde hair. People with darker skin tones can also burn. Taking certain medications or having compromised skin also increases the risk.



## To prevent sunburn

- Avoid the sun between 10 AM and 4 PM
- Wear a hat, especially if hair is thin on top of head
- Reapply sunscreen every two to three hours, or more if swimming
- Remember, sunburns can happen on cloudy days
- Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes before going outside
- Try to stay in the shade
- Use lip balm, including sunscreen
- Put on sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection

## Preventing Hot Car Deaths

People with IDD are at high risk of suffering a heat stroke, other injuries, or even dying if left unattended in a car during the summer months. Leaving a person alone for less than 10 minutes can cause serious harm, as they may not be able to exit the vehicle even when temperatures become dangerously high. They may also not be able to call for help. Others at risk include infants and young children, elderly adults, and people who are overweight or who have chronic medical conditions, including those taking medications such as psychotropic medications and diuretics. Always remember:

- Never leave anyone in a parked car, no matter what the reason or for how long. Cracking the window does not protect people from heatstroke when left in a vehicle during hot temperatures.

## Water Safety

Every day, about 10 people die from unintentional drowning. Of these, two are children aged 14 or younger, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Direct support professionals (DSPs) should know each person's ability to be safe in and around water. For children, some people with Autism, and those who are at risk around water, take the following steps:

## Autism and Drowning

According to the National Autism Association, drowning is among the leading causes of death for people with autism.

In 2009, 2010, and 2011, accidental drowning accounted for 91 percent of total U.S. deaths reported in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) ages 14 and younger, after they wandered away or eloped.

More than one third of children with ASD who wander or elope are rarely or not able to communicate their name, address, or phone number, making it especially important to address potential risks.



Check out [this resource](#) for first responders from Autism Speaks

- Identify nearby water hazards (bathtubs, pools, hot tubs, and other bodies of water) and ensure that precautions such as locks, pool covers, alarms, and fences are in place and checked frequently.
- Make sure your family, friends, neighbors, service providers, and babysitters know about specific risks (water safety and wandering) so they can ensure safeguards are in place.
- Encourage swimming lessons or water safety classes.
- When swimming is planned, make sure the responsible staff is comfortable being in the water and providing close supervision, and has first aid and CPR training.
- Use life jackets or other flotation devices.
- Watch for someone who is too tired, cold, far from safety, getting too much sun, or doing strenuous activity.

## Food Poisoning Safety

By following four simple steps—Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill—you can help protect you and the people you support from food poisoning. To learn more, click: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/keep-food-safe.html>