

Heat & Older Adults Safety Toolkit (HOAST)

Arizona is one of the hottest places on Earth from May to September, where heat-related illnesses are common. Heat-related illness is a preventable condition, but has been the number one weather-related cause of death in the United States. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), heat-related illnesses cause more deaths than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. In response to an increasing number of extreme heat events, the Arizona Department of Health Services created the Heat & Older Adults Safety Toolkit (HOAST) to inform older adults on recognition, prevention, and treatment strategies for heat-related illnesses.

Year after year, nearly 3,000 people visit Arizona emergency rooms because of heat-related illnesses. Over 2,700 deaths from exposure to excessive natural heat have occurred in Arizona for the past ten years. Older adults, those aged 65 and older, make up 18 percent of the population, but account for 32 percent of all heat-related deaths among Arizona residents. Older adults are one of the populations more vulnerable to the effects of excessive heat because they do not adjust as well to changes in temperature. They are also most likely to have a chronic medical condition and use prescription medicines that alter the body's normal response to heat.

This toolkit contains materials for older adults and caregivers on the basics of heat safety. We invite you to share these materials with older adults and their families, caregivers, and all staff members in order to increase awareness of heat-related illnesses and prevent them from happening.

Please contact ADHS for more information or for additional copies of the materials at: extremeweather@azdhs.gov.

Please visit our website for more information on heat illness. The Heat & Older Adults Safety Toolkit can also be found at our website: azdhs.gov/heat.