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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
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NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEAT ADVISORY FOR OLDER ADULTS

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – The National Weather Service in Wichita has issued a heat advisory for our part of the country. Central Plains Area Agency on Aging and Sedgwick County Department on Aging remind citizens that, as temperatures rise, so do the number of older adults at risk for heat exposure, heat stroke, and other heat-related illnesses. According to the Center for Disease Control - National Center for Environmental Health (CDC), between 1979 and 2003, extreme heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths. In 2001 more than 300 people died from excessive heat exposure, more than the combined number of fatalities from other weather-related incidents such as hurricanes, tornados, flood, and lightening.

Studies have shown that a significant rise in heat-related health problems occur following extreme heat that lasts for more than two consecutive days; the heat advisory for Sedgwick County is expected to last through Monday, August 4. According to the CDC, adults 65 and older do not adjust as well to sudden changes in heat. They are more likely to have medical conditions such as high blood pressure, poor circulation and heart disease or take prescriptions that can upset the body's normal response to high temperatures and ability to perspire.

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An older person may have an increased risk of heat-related illness if they are living alone or have no assistance from family or friends. With today's high cost of food and gas, financial constraints may prevent them from using or repairing their air conditioner or fans. Fear of crime may also prevent some from opening windows and doors.

Becoming familiar with the warning signs of heat-related illness will help older adults in families and neighborhoods.

Warning signs for heat stroke include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Urinating infrequently

The best defense is prevention. Here are some tips on preventing and managing heat:

- Drink more fluids regardless of your activity level.
- Avoid drinks that include caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar.
- Stay indoors. If you or someone you know does not have an air conditioner, there are places to go during extreme heat such as: a public library, senior centers, a shopping mall or a friend or family member's home – even a few hours can help your body remain cooler.
- Electric fans are helpful, but taking a cool shower or bath or finding an air-conditioned location will provide the body the needed relief from the heat.
- Wear light colored, loose fitting, and lightweight clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Do not engage in strenuous activity.

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During these hot summer months, Sedgwick County Department on Aging and Central Plains Area Agency on Aging encourage older adults to stay out of the extreme heat and take advantage of free programs at local senior centers, senior dining centers or volunteer for a non-profit agency. These are excellent options to beat the heat, meet new friends, eat a free lunch and enjoy activities including presentations, entertainment, health and wellness activities and volunteer opportunities.

For answers on aging or information about services available to older adults call Central Plains Area Agency on Aging/Sedgwick County Department on Aging at 660-5120 or (800)367-7298 or visit us online at www.sedgwickcounty.gov or www.cpaaa.org.

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