WARNING TEXAS SUMMER AND HEAT IS HERE

Heat is the number one weather-related killer among chronically ill patients such as those on Dialysis — more than tornados, floods, and hurricanes, suggested Climatecentral.org. According to the Daily Register, "Dialysis patients are particularly sensitive to periods of high heat." It is estimated that between 600 and 1,500 heat-related deaths occur in an average summer in the United States.

Well, what can Chronic Kidney Disease and Dialysis patients do to protect themselves? Add questions about living conditions i.e. air conditioners, fans, etc. during your assessment to determine need for possible Social Worker referral. This is especially important in the presence of heat and/or weather advisories.

TIPS FOR KEEPING SAFE AND COOL

1. **Never sit in your car:** Sometimes after Dialysis to recover or while waiting for a family member or friend to run errands, a Dialysis patient will stay seated in the car. Patients should never wait in cars while it is hot outside. Even with the windows down, it is often a big no-no. This is because Dialysis patients are more susceptible and are at a higher risk for heat-related illness and injury than the general population. As a result, just a few minutes in a hot car can be extremely dangerous - even fatal for patients. Try to find a bench outside or wait inside the destination that you are visiting (which likely has air conditioning) instead of taking the risk of staying in the car. If you are driving, use the air conditioning or drive with the windows down when you start heating up.

2. **Outdoor...fun?** Try to avoid doing any sort of strenuous activity in the warm weather. Even when patients are not feeling their best, they push themselves to get up and go for a walk, hike or a bike ride. These sorts of activities can actually be very strenuous and should be avoided during the summer heat. Try doing your walks inside through the house, or riding a stationary bike at your local gym.
3. **Stay cool**: Although it is recommended that most patients stay inside while the sun is at its hottest, they should also remain cool. If the temperatures are hot then open the windows, turn on the fan, and/or start the central cooling system (air conditioning system).

4. **Wash it off and cool down**: Most Dialysis patients do not realize that when it is sweltering hot outside, a nice simple cold shower or sponge bath may offer a lot of relief. Also, brushing your teeth can be quite refreshing and even limit thirst.

5. **Feeling thirsty?**: Although Dialysis patients are particularly sensitive to hot weather, they could harm themselves by drinking too much fluid. Always ask your Nephrologist how much you should drink when the weather is hot. Also, limit your thirst by avoiding salt, sugar, and sports drinks (often higher in sodium). Moreover, sucking on a lemon wedge, ice chips, sugar-free sour candy, and eating frozen grapes should help to quench thirst during the hot summer months.

6. **Warning signs of heat exhaustion**: If heat exhaustion is not treated, it can turn into a heat stroke. Warning signs of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating, cramps, headache, confusion, nausea or vomiting, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, and fainting. If you believe that you are experiencing heat exhaustion then remove any tight or unnecessary clothing, take a cool shower, bath, or sponge bath, and apply other cooling measures such as a cold towel.

7. **Warning signs of heat stroke**: A heat stroke can be fatal. Warning signs of heat stroke include hot dry skin, very high body temperature, dizziness, nausea, confusion, strange behavior or unconsciousness, and rapid pulse or a throbbing headache. In the case of a heat stroke, call 9-1-1.

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*For more hints on keeping cool and watching your fluid intake, contact your dialysis staff today*
Summer heat means greater thirst, a challenge to anyone on a fluid-restricted kidney diet. If you are a dialysis patient or you have chronic kidney disease (CKD) and need to limit your fluid intake, staying cool during the summer can help. Keeping liquid intake to a minimum when it is hot outside is easier if you have a plan that includes low-sodium, thirst-quenching foods and some tricks recommended by renal dietitians.

10 low-sodium, thirst-quenching foods

1. **Chilled fresh fruit or frozen cut-up fruit from your kidney-friendly food list.** Try frozen grapes or peach slices, a refreshing cold apple or handful of chilled berries.

2. **Lemon or lime slices, frozen or added to ice water.** The tartness from the lemon or lime stimulates saliva to help relieve a dry mouth.

3. **Crispy cold vegetables.** Try chilled cucumber slices, jicama, carrots, celery or radishes for a low-potassium thirst quencher.

4. **Fresh mint.** The flavor of mint added to salads, beverages or other dishes cools and refreshes your mouth similar to a mint-flavored gum.

5. **Caffeine-free soda (7-Up, Ginger ale), homemade lemonade or caffeine-free tea.** Caffeine has a diuretic effect and is associated with increased urine output in people with some kidney function. However, the end result is increased thirst following caffeine consumption.

6. **Gelatin.** Eat small spoonful of flavored gelatin because it lasts longer than a mouthful of water. Make double-strength gelatin and eat as a finger food.

7. **Chilled low-sodium soup.** Make a chilled, low-sodium, low potassium soup to provide nourishment and to cool from the inside out.

8. **Sour candy.** It’s not for everyone, but eating sour candy really turns on the saliva glands, making a dry mouth moist almost immediately.

9. **Frozen treats from your grocery store.** A few suggestions include Minute Maid Soft Frozen Lemonade® (3 ounces of fluid, 70 calories), Fla.Vor.Ice® freezer pops (1.5 ounces, regular or sugar-free) or one of the many Popsicle® products (regular or sugar-free).

10. **Flavored ice.** Make flavored ice by freezing lemonade, juice or tea in an ice cube tray. Suck or munch on a cube slowly to chase away thirst without drinking.
Tips for thirst control

Measure all fluids carefully in a measuring cup. Record your daily fluid intake each time you drink or eat foods that are liquid at room temperature.

- Salty foods make you thirsty so limit sodium intake to help control thirst.
- Drink your beverages ice cold. They will be more refreshing and will quench your thirst.
- Be aware of hidden liquid foods like gelatin, ice, soup, gravy and watermelon. Remember to count foods liquid at room temperature as part of your fluid intake.
- Eat kidney-friendly diet fruits ice cold between meals.
- When your mouth is dry, rinse it with mouthwash or cold water (remember to spit it out).
- Spend the hottest part of the day in an air-conditioned room if possible. Staying cool will help reduce your thirst. Try wearing a wet bandana around your neck or on your head if you must be out in the heat.
- Try to take your medications with your mealtime liquids. Some pills are easy to swallow in a spoonful of applesauce or other moist food.
- Slowly sip allowed beverages to savor the liquid longer. Use a smaller cup or glass.
- If you have diabetes, keep your glucose in good control. High blood sugar will increase your thirst.
- If you are on hemodialysis, set your goal to gain no more that 2-4 pounds between treatments, or 1-2 pounds per day (or the goal established by our dietitian). Two cups of liquid equals one pound of fluid gain.

OTHER COOLING IDEAS