BLANDFORD GROUP PRACTICE

Keeping well in Summer

While the summer may lift our spirits, temperatures can sometimes become uncomfortable and even dangerously hot. Anyone can be affected by the heat, but you may be more at risk if you are older, have a long-term health condition (such as diabetes or dementia), difficulties with swallowing or are on certain medications.

Changes in our bodies as we age mean:

- We are less likely to notice when we feel hot
- We take longer to cool down
- We are less likely to feel thirsty

We need to try to drink more than usual in hot weather, even if you don't feel thirsty. You should drink cool drinks (water, squash etc.) and at least 8 glasses (3 to 4 pints) spread throughout the day - you should always drink more than you think you need. Drinking through a straw may make this seem not so daunting!

Limit the number of drinks containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cola etc.) and alcohol as these can dehydrate you.

You may be tempted to drink less before you go to bed - please do continue to drink (even if it means several trips to the loo during the night!) Also take a glass of water to bed with you.

Try to eat foods that contain a lot of water (e.g. salads and fruits like watermelon). Make sure you wash these thoroughly, and keep them in the fridge. It is important to eat normally during hot weather, even if you feel less hungry.

Avoid doing too much activity, especially between 11 am and 3 pm, during hot weather. Wear light, suitable clothing (cotton is best).

At home, close the windows, curtains and blinds during the day (unless they are of thick material). Turn off non-essential lights and electrical equipment.

If safe to do so, open windows at night.

If you go out, cover your skin as much as possible with light (ideally cotton) clothing, and try to stay in the shade as much as possible and take a sun hat, sun cream (at least SPF 30) and sunglasses (with a UV protection of 100%) with you! Half an hour before you go put a generous amount of sun cream on your face, ears, neck, feet, head (if you have thinning hair) and any exposed skin.

Hot weather preparation checklist:

Have you got enough supplies of food and water?

Have you got enough medication?

Have you got extra support (friends and neighbours) who could help with shopping if it is too hot to go out?

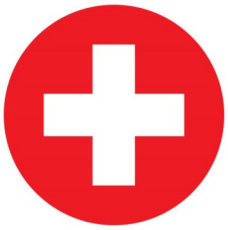
Are your fridge and freezer working properly?

Have you checked that any fans or air-conditioning systems are working?

Have you turned off your central heating?

Symptoms of dehydration or heat exhaustion and what to do:

Dehydration happens when you lose more fluid than you take in (by sweating or not drinking enough). Things to watch out for are:



- Dizziness
- Thirst
- Dry mouth, lips and eyes
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Dark-coloured urine and/or urinating little (fewer than four times a day)
- Loss of appetite and/or nausea
- Sweating heavily and pale, clammy skin
- Cramps
- Fast breathing or pulse

If you have any of these symptoms, remove any unnecessary clothing, sit (or lie) down in a cool, shady place, raise your feet above your hips, and sip cool water slowly but continuously for at least half an hour. You can try to cool your skin using cool, wet flannels. You should start to feel better after 30 minutes. However, if you do not feel better after this time call 111.

If you are with someone who becomes confused, starts to hallucinate or lose consciousness call 999 and ask for an ambulance as they may have developed heat stroke which can be dangerous. While waiting, try and remove unnecessary clothing, cool their forehead with cold wet flannels and, if they lose consciousness, put them in the recovery position.