staying cool with summer heat

By: Dr. Alyssa Musgrove

Even though we are well into September, the summer heat is showing no sign of fading just yet. With fall sports ramping up, many of us will be spending more time outdoors, be it watching the kids at a soccer game, cheering our favorite football team onto victory or even enjoying an outdoor concert. Here are some simple ways to keep cool while the temperatures remain high.

**Increase Vitamin C**University of Alabama researchers found Vitamin C increases tolerance for heat by delaying sweat gland fatigue, which reduces the risk and occurrence of heat rash and heat exhaustion. Researchers also discovered Vitamin C keeps body temperature from rising during heat exposure and can counteract the negative effects of sun damage. Supplementing daily with doses of Vitamin C, as small as 250 milligrams, can be helpful. If you are looking to increase your Vitamin C intake naturally, reach for the following Vitamin C-rich foods:

* Citrus fruits, such as oranges and grapefruit
* Berries
* Kiwi
* Guava
* Mango
* Peas
* Leafy green vegetables
* Red peppers
* Brussels sprouts
* Broccoli
* Cauliflower

**Stay hydrated**A quick way to overheat in the summer is by being dehydrated, so sneak in extra water whenever you can. Seasonal produce like watermelon, cucumber and cantaloupes contain a large amount of water. They are also easy to digest and do not need to be cooked.

Peppermint tea is a great way to stay hydrated and also cool down. Peppermint contains menthol, which tricks the body into feeling cold. You can also spray mint tea or peppermint oil mixed with water on your skin to provide a cool feeling.

Coconut water is also known for its cooling properties and is a great source of electrolytes, which are lost through sweating. Coconut water is a great cure for leg cramps and is a relatively low-calorie, low-sugar substitute for sports drinks. I always recommend purchasing coconut water that is stored in the cold section of the grocery store. The unrefrigerated coconut water on store shelves is usually pasteurized, which kills the nutrients and electrolytes obtained from fresh, raw coconut water.

**Skip the barbeque and ice cream**
High protein foods like red meat and high fat foods such as ice cream can be difficult for the body to digest. Digesting these foods requires the body to expend extra energy, which raises body temperature. Try snacking throughout the course of the day, instead of sitting down for a large, heavy meal. And reach for lower fat frozen desserts, such as sorbet or shaved ice, instead.

**Find a spot of shade**If you are out and about and want to cool down, find a leafy tree to sit under. The shade from trees is actually cooler than shade from buildings and other man-made objects. A tree maintains its temperature by circulating water inside itself and releasing moisture into the atmosphere to keep itself and the air around it cool, a process called transpiration. In contrast, buildings tend to trap heat and radiate it back into the surrounding environment.

**Create a cross-breeze**When it is 80 degrees outside, it only takes an hour for your car to reach 125 degrees inside. Instead of cranking the AC and walking away (or sitting in the car and suffering while it cools down), try creating a cross-breeze by rolling down the passenger side window and then opening and closing the door opposite of that window several times to quickly draw the hot air out.

**Dress for the occasion**
Wear white or pastel colors, which reflect light, as opposed to dark colored clothes, which tend to trap heat. Whenever possible, choose loose-fitting clothes, such as shorts and dresses. Loose-fitting clothes provide better air flow to keep you cool.

*Pathways to Healing specializes in holistic chiropractic care. Dr. Alyssa Musgrove draws on a variety of techniques, including chiropractic, kinesiology, nutrition, food allergy testing and lifestyle counseling to assist clients in achieving optimal health and wellness in one setting. Pathways to Healing is located at 1022 Founders Row, Lake Oconee Village, Greensboro. The office can be reached at 706-454-2040.*