



Mabel

In a quiet home, we met Mabel a 72-year-old woman for an interview. She and her husband had lived in the same aging family house for over 40 years. Mabel is a heart patient with a genetic condition and has an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD) to manage her health. From the start, it was clear that she took things day by day, her health shaping much of her routine.

When asked about her experience with heatwaves, she recalled a significant moment in her life: "In 1997, I had my first heart failure. Since then, heat has been a real problem for me. I can manage up to 25 degrees, but beyond that, it gets difficult."

As the temperatures rise, her routine changes. "We used to go to the beach in the morning and then come back home to sit in the shade or stay indoors during the afternoon. But as we've gotten older, it's harder to handle. I also have a hip replacement now, so walking on the beach is no longer an option."

She was well aware of the health risks heatwaves pose, especially for someone in her condition. "If I stay in the sun too long, I start having heart problems. And you can get rashes from the heat too."

To avoid the worst of the heat, she had a few key habits. "I stay out of the sun as much as possible, and if we go out, I always bring water. Drinking a lot is important. These days, I stay indoors most of the time. Before I got the ICD, we used to go cycling to cool off, but that's no longer an option."

Her awareness of what to do in hot weather didn't come naturally—it was something she learned over time. "You figure it out as you go. When you're a heart patient, they even show you a video explaining what you can and can't do."

During a heatwave, she mostly stays at home. "I sit by the fan or outside in the shade. There aren't many cool places around here." When asked if she needed any support during heatwaves, she replied, "My husband and I handle everything together."

Information about heatwaves typically came from the media, she said. "I don't receive much, just what I see on TV. The doctor usually reminds us, but I already know what to do."

When asked how municipalities could help residents deal with extreme heat, she wasn't sure. "I don't really know if that would help us. Maybe they could provide more fans in nursing homes."

Finally, when asked if she could offer help to other elderly people during heatwaves, she shook her head. "I can't do that, I'm not in a position to help."

Her advice for other seniors during a heatwave was clear: "Stay inside and keep cool. Drink—drink a lot of water."



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