

# HEALTH ALERT

*Office of Developmental Programs  
Office of the Medical Director*

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## **SUMMER HEAT SAFETY**

Summer has hit and the temperatures are soaring. High temperature forecasts this week are in the 90's for this week with some areas predicting that the temperature will go over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Extreme heat like this causes heat related illness and can kill. Below find some facts about extreme heat and ways to avoid heat related illness.

### **The facts about extreme heat:**

- Extreme heat causes more deaths than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined.
- Heat related injuries are preventable.
- Dehydration contributes to heat injury.
- Some people are more likely to get heat related injuries than others.

### **Who is at most risk for injury from extreme heat?**

- People over 65 and under 5 years of age
- People with certain medical conditions or on certain medications like:
  - Heart disease, diabetes, obesity or high blood pressure
  - Medications for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation
- People that work or exercise outside

### **What are the heat related illnesses?**

- *Heat stroke* is a life-threatening emergency where the body temperature rises quickly. Symptoms include:
  - Hot, dry skin, high body temperature (can be as high as 106 F)
  - Confusion, delirium, dizziness or loss of consciousness
  - Seizures or convulsions
  - Rapid pulse
- *Heat exhaustion* can precede heat stroke and includes cramps plus the following:
  - Pale sweaty skin
  - Weakness or fatigue
  - Headache, nausea, and/or dizziness
  - Fast weak pulse and fast shallow breathing
- *Heat cramps* are severe cramping of muscles because of dehydration usually while exercising in the heat.

- *Heat rash* is skin irritation caused by excessive sweating.

**What to do to prevent heat related injuries:**

- Drink lots of fluids especially water. Keep cold water with you whenever you are outside. Talk to your doctor about how much to drink if you must limit liquids.
- Be sure to replace salt either by eating some salty things or drinking some (not all) of your liquids as sports drinks. Talk to your doctor if you must limit salt.
- Wear light weight, light colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Limit outside activities to morning before noon and evening after 6 pm. Go at a slower pace and monitor yourself for signs of heat problems (see above). STOP if you begin to develop difficulties and move to an air conditioned or shaded area.
- Stay indoors in air conditioning. If you don't have air conditioning, use a fan with the windows open and try to spend some time during the day in air conditioning such as at the library, mall, or a friend's house that has air conditioning.
- Never take a cool shower immediately after becoming overheated. Also avoid using the oven or stove especially during the hottest parts of the day.
- If working or exercising outside, work with another person and monitor each other for signs of heat problems (see above). Try to stay in the shade as much as possible.
- Monitor people that are at high risk. Visit the people who are elderly or those that live alone and are at risk and watch them closely for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

**What not to do in the extreme heat:**

- **Never** leave anyone in a parked vehicle (closed or open) for any amount of time in hot weather.
- Avoid hot foods and heavy meals. Eat more frequent, smaller meals.
- Don't drink a lot of fluids with caffeine or sugar in them as they can increase water loss. Don't drink alcohol in hot weather as it also can increase water loss.

**What to do if you see any of the signs of heat exhaustion or stroke:**

- Respond quickly to heat related symptoms. Move the person to a cooler area. If possible move indoors into air conditioning, if not then move into the shade.
- Remove any heavy clothing.
- Cool the person with water either by using wet cloths or towels. Stay with the person. Don't leave them unsupervised.
- If the person shows mild symptoms of heat exhaustion, then give them fluids to drink. Do not do this if they are confused or lethargic.
- If the person shows symptoms of heat stroke or is at risk and has heat exhaustion symptoms, then call 911. When in doubt call 911.

**HEAT ILLNESS CAN KILL. PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND RAPID RESPONSE ARE CRITICAL.**