

Summer heat precautions

To protect yourself and your loved ones when temperatures are extremely high, remember to keep cool and use common sense. The following tips are important and can help keep you and your family safe.

- **Drink plenty of fluids** – during heavy exercise, drink 2 to 4 glasses of cool fluids each hour. However, do not wait until exercise to start hydrating. You need to increase fluid intake in hot weather regardless of your activity level.
- **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen** – choose cool, loose clothing and use hats or umbrellas to shade faces and heads. Use a sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes prior to going out, and continue to reapply according to package directions.
- **Use a buddy system** – when in the heat, monitor the condition of your co-workers, teammates and family members and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illnesses can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness.
- **Monitor those at high risk** – those at greater risk include infants, children up to 4 years of age, adults age 65 and older, overweight people, people who overexert during work/exercise, and those who are physically ill.

Symptoms of heat related illnesses

Heat stroke – occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Warning signs include:

- Extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees, orally)
- Red, hot and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

If you see any of these signs, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the individual. Do the following:

- Move to a shady area.
- Cool the person down rapidly using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse them in a tub of cool water; place them in a cool shower; hose them with cool water from a garden hose.
- Monitor body temperature and continue cooling the body until oral temperature reaches 101-102 degrees.
- If emergency personnel are delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instructions.
- Do not give the victim fluids to drink.

Heat exhaustion – milder form of heat-related illnesses that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly people, those with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Warning signs include:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke. Seek medical attention if symptoms are severe or the victim has other medical problems such as heart disease or high blood pressure. Otherwise, help the victim cool off and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour.

Provide the following:

- Cool, nonalcoholic beverage
- Rest
- Cool shower, bath or sponge bath
- Air-conditioned environment
- Lightweight clothing

Heat cramps – usually affect people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms – usually in the abdomen, arms or legs – that may occur in association with strenuous activity. If medical attention is not necessary, take these steps:

- Stop all activity and sit in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside.
- Seek medical attention if they do not subside in one hour.

Heat rash – skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather. Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. The best treatment is to provide a cooler, less humid environment. Keep the affected area dry. Dusting powder may be used to increase comfort, but avoid using ointments or creams – they keep the skin warm and moist and may make the condition worse.

If medical attention is needed for an emergency, call 911.

To find a Community Health Network physician or medical facility near you, call 800-777-7775 or visit eCommunity.com.