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News Release

For Immediate Release

Take steps to prevent heat-related illness

As temperatures return to the mid-90s, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department is once again seeing reports of heat-related illness from area hospitals and emergency rooms. There have been six reported cases in the last week, with more likely to come because reporting tends to lag behind incidents.

Still, the number of reported cases is far below last year, thanks to an unusually cool summer. Through today, there are 77 total cases. Last year at this time there were more than 200 reported by Greene County medical centers. The final total for 2012 was 224 cases.

One of the contributing factors to heat-related illness is acclimation. As the hot weather wears on, our bodies become more acclimated to the higher temperatures and humidity, and so we are somewhat less likely to experience the onset of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Cooler temperatures this summer may leave some people less acclimated, especially if they do not regularly work outside or otherwise spend time outdoors. This could be a concern with the upcoming Labor Day holiday as people take to backyards, rivers, lakes and other outdoor fun.

Heat exhaustion is the most common heat-related illness and can lead to dehydration. Symptoms include heavy sweating, paleness, tiredness, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness or fainting, headache, nausea or vomiting. A person with these symptoms should move to a cool spot, rest and drink cool water. If symptoms worsen or last longer than an hour, they should seek medical attention.

Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature climbs to 104°F. It can be deadly. Call 9-1-1 immediately if a person has symptoms including a high body temperature, red, hot or dry skin, rapid pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion or unconsciousness.

Tips to protect against these entirely preventable illnesses, along with current HRI case totals for Greene County, can be found online at: <http://health.springfieldmo.gov/heat>.

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