

June 25, 2013

News Release

*For Immediate Release*

## **Heat-Related Illness Common But Preventable**

With temperatures rising into the 90s and summer humidity blanketing the Ozarks, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department urges residents to take steps to protect against heat-related illnesses. These illnesses, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, occur when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. Children, senior adults and people with chronic illness are at highest risk.

**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.

To protect against heat-related illness:

- Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty; avoid drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Avoid strenuous work or exercise outside during the hottest part of the day. If that is not practical, take frequent breaks and remember to drink plenty of water.
- Stay in an air-conditioned facility; if your home is not air conditioned, visit a shopping center, public library, community center, cooling center or other air-conditioned facility.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Protect yourself from the sun with a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels).
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on:
  - Infants and young children
  - People aged 65 or older
  - People who have a mental illness
  - Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure
- Don't forget about your pets, either. Tips on pets and heat can be found on our website at the address below.

The health department coordinates with a number of community partners during the summer to provide some relief to the heat when the National Weather Service issues a heat advisory. Those efforts typically include the opening of public cooling centers, free rides on City Utilities bus lines for those who need transportation to cooling centers, and extended Park Board pool hours. When the conditions warrant these changes, the community will be alerted via a news release.

The health department also tracks the number of confirmed cases of heat-related illness reported by hospitals and emergency rooms in Springfield. Those figures, along with more tips about heat illness can be found at: <http://health.springfieldmo.gov/heat>.