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News Release

For Immediate Release

Take Steps to Avoid Heat Illness

Summer officially begins today and when the temperature and humidity rise, so does the potential for heat-related illnesses such as heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Conditions such as age, obesity, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use can increase the risk for heat-related illness.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department tracks the number of various heat-related illnesses each year. These illnesses are entirely preventable, yet many occur every summer. Since the department began tracking reports from hospitals and doctors' offices on June 1, there have been 14 instances of heat-related illness in Greene County, including three hospitalizations, and ranging in age from 8 to 86.

During periods of extreme heat when the National Weather Service has issued heat warnings or advisories, the health department will provide information about local cooling centers if they open.

Below are some tips to help you stay healthy in the extreme heat. More information about the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness, tips for pets, and useful links can be found online at health.springfieldmo.gov/heat.

Basic Tips to Beat the Heat

- 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 with an 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 for any amount of time. On an 80-degree day, the temperature inside the vehicle can heat up to 109 degrees in just 20 minutes.

For more information, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, (417) 874-1205; or Karen McInnis, Environmental & Community Health Planner, (417) 864-1623.