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News Release

For Immediate Release

Steps to Protect Against Heat-Related Illnesses

High temperatures have begun and the Springfield-Greene County Health Department urges residents to take steps to protect against heat-related illnesses.

Heat-related illnesses like 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
- Wear light-weight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing, hats and sunglasses and use sunscreen
- 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.)
- Use a buddy system between co-workers in high heat-stress jobs to watch for signs of heat stress
- Check on senior adults, young children and pets
- Never leave infants, children, senior adults or pets in a parked vehicle
- Eat small, frequent meals and avoid high protein foods, hot foods and heavy meals
- 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
- Do not rely on fans as your primary cooling device; fans re-circulate room air and may actually increase your body temperature and your risk of heat-related illness
- Ask your pharmacist or health care provider if medication you are taking puts you at increased risk for heat-related illness
- Provide pets with extra water and access to a shady environment

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