

## Southeast Health District

"Keeping Communities Safe and Healthy"

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## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2010

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# Beat the heat: Prevent heat-related illnesses

Temperatures continue to rise. With the extreme heat comes a greater chance for residents to suffer heat-related illnesses.

People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool themselves. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating just isn't enough. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.

The Southeast Health District and your local health department encourage residents to take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Here are some simple tips to help you get through the heat without getting sick:

- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic). Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. If your doctor limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink.
- Don't drink fluids that contain caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar. These can actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors as often as you can. Stay in an air-conditioned place, if at all possible. If you don't have AC in your home, go to the mall or public library or other public facility that has AC – even for just a few hours – to let your body cool down.

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- You can use electric fans, but when temperatures are in the high 90s or higher, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving into a place that has AC is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle. Temperatures can get dangerously high within a few minutes in a closed vehicle.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit your outdoor activity to the early morning or late evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. If you are on a special diet, talk to your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing 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).

Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk. Check regularly on:

- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle. Temperatures can get dangerously high within a few minutes in a closed vehicle.
- Infants and young children
- People aged 65 or older
- People who have a mental illness and
- Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure.

It is important for residents to take the necessary precautions during this latest heat wave. If you have more questions about heat-related illnesses, contact your local health department or your healthcare provider.

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