



ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ulster County Office For The Aging's Preparation For And Response To Excessive Heat Events

Did you know that each year more people die from "excessive heat events" than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined? According to Kalkstein & Greene, 1997. An Evaluation of Climate/Mortality Relationships in Large US Cities and the Possible Impact of a Climate Change. Environmental Health Perspectives, 105(1):84-93, "during an average summer, approximately 1,500 people die from excessive heat events in the US.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Fact Sheet for Extreme Heat (8-16-04) elderly people (aged 65+) are more prone to heat stress than younger people for several reasons:

- Elderly people do not adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in temperature.
- They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that upsets normal body responses to heat.
- They are more likely to take prescription medicines that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.

If you have elderly relatives or neighbors, you can help them protect themselves from heat related stress by:

- Visiting those at risk at least twice a day and watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Take them to air conditioned locations if they have transportation problems.
- Make sure older adults have access to an electric fan whenever possible.

If you see any signs of severe heat stress, you may be dealing with a life threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the affected person.

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Do the following:

- Get the person to a shady area.
- Cool the person rapidly, using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the person in a tub of cool water; place the person in a cool shower; spray the person with cool water from a garden hose; sponge the person with cool water; or if the humidity is low, wrap the person in a cool, wet sheet and fan him or her vigorously.
- Monitor body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101 – 102 degrees F
- If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instructions.
- Do not give the person alcohol to drink.
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

Signs & Symptoms of **Heat Stroke**: the most serious heat related illness: occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the body loses its ability to sweat, & it is unable to cool down. Body temperatures rise to 106 degrees F. or higher within 10-15 minutes. Heat stroke can be the cause of death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided. Watch for these signs/symptoms:

- Extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees)
- Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea

Signs & Symptoms of **Heat Exhaustion** is a milder form of heat related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Watch for these signs/symptoms:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle Cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Skin: may be cool and moist
- Pulse rate: fast and weak
- Breathing: fast and shallow

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat, or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-28547 (Española), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY)