

For Immediate Release

To: Ulster County News Media
From: LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH, Public Health Director
Date: July 6, 2010
Re: Preventing Heat-Related Illness

Kingston, NY-- The sun is shining, the temperature has risen and you can't wait to get outdoors. The last thing you are probably thinking about is a heat-related illnesses, which can cause serious injury and even death if not treated, warns Dr. Hasbrouck of the Ulster County Department of Health.

Anyone at any time, even those who are physically fit, can suffer heat-related illness. Some people, such as infants, young children and those over 65 years of age, are at even greater risk than others. Also, people with chronic respiratory illnesses, such as asthma or diabetes, may find that their conditions get worse during the summer months.

Heat or sun stroke is the most dangerous type of heat-related illness and causes several hundred deaths in the United States each year. Heat stroke occurs when a person's body temperature goes over 105 degrees Fahrenheit. If you think someone has heat stroke, call 911, Dr. Hasbrouck said.

A person may not have heat or sun stroke, but can experience heat exhaustion and heat cramps. Heat exhaustion symptoms include cold, pale, clammy skin, fainting and vomiting. Move the person to an area out of the direct sunlight and put a washcloth or towel with cool water on the back of their neck or forehead. Give them water every 15 minutes for one hour.

Heat cramps are painful spasms in the legs and abdomen. To relieve heat cramps, apply pressure on the cramping muscles or gently massage them, advises Dr. Hasbrouck. As in the case of heat exhaustion, give the person sips of water every 15 minutes for one hour.

To ensure a safe summer, take these steps to stay cool in hot weather:

- Drink plenty of fluid. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Water is best because it replenishes your body's natural fluids. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Do not eat a lot of food high in protein, which increases your body heat.
- Engage in physical activity during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. Try not to go outside during the hottest part of the day - between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- Stay indoors in a cool or air-conditioned place.
- Never leave a person or pet in a parked vehicle, even if you expect it to be a short period of time.
- Please remember to check your neighbors without air conditioning, particularly the elderly who do not have transportation.

For more information on heat-related illness consult your physician.

Various municipalities have set up "cooling stations" where residents who or do not have access to air conditioning can take a break and cool down. For current locations and schedules, please visit Ulster County Emergency Management information page at:

<http://ucemergencyservices.blogspot.com/2010/07/july-heat-wave.html>

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